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The Anteroom and Other Poems

by

William Herbert Woods

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The Anteroom and Other Poems

by

William Hervey Woods.

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by

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Preface

With the courteous permission of the several owners of the copyrights, here gladly acknowledged, the author has gathered in this little volume verse which originally appeared in *Scribner, The Atlantic Monthly, The Century, Harper's Magazine, St. Nicholas, The Youth's Companion, The Independent, The Sunday School Times,* and other periodicals. To this is added other work, some of it perhaps of equal importance, which has not hitherto appeared in print; and the whole represents the author's avocation during the later years of a long pastorate.

It has been a pleasure to write these lines. "Art for Art's Sake," and verse for verse's sake, may be a weary way apart, it is true, but each has its own reward. And if through these broken and not always transparent windows, the reader may gain some right vision of the author's world, the author shall dwell content.

W. H. W.

212 North Carey Street,
Baltimore.

TO

THE LONG-SUFFERING, BUT STILL TOO

KINDLY CRITICS IN MY

OWN HOME

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The Midnight Train

It rolls up out of dreams—
Sometimes it wakes me in Himal'yan snow,
Sometimes in Kandahar I hear it blow,
As round the mountain gleams
The Cyclops headlight, and I catch the roar
Cushioned with distance till it sounds no more
Than snow-fed April streams.

But quickly moves anear
And now, still hissing, at the station stands
This nightmare monster out of dragon lands;
Then on my waiting ear
Bells ring; and dim-lit squares, uncoiling slow,
Like dragon scales, across the orchard go
And past the hillside clear.

So nigh the coaches glide
That sometimes at the window where I wait
I catch swift glimpses of their silken state—
The gay world in its pride
I see go by; anon, a hectic face
Fleeing the plague; and oft in youthful grace
The bridegroom and the bride.

They're faring south, they say,
To those bright regions where the only snows
Are pink and golden, and surnamed The Rose;
Joys, half a year away
From these bleak hills and skies of wintry gloom,
For yon blest pilgrims shall wear summer bloom
When once more night is day.

The townsfolk round me spread
Stir in their sleep, and say, "She's late, to-night."
—Awake, ye sleepers! When was ever sight
Or sound like this that sped,
This roaring earthquake through the darkness hurled!
Not Phaethon's coursers so might shake the world
When first the dawn they led.

Nay, nor so dread to view
The fiery car that swept the Tishbite home;
Triumphs acclaimed in Babylon and Rome
Did punier pomp endue,
And vanished gods, around the Trojan gate
Ramping of old, in far less godlike state
Their mimic axles drew.

But Oh! to go like this
When we too change our planets! Not with moan
Nor yet to start in silence and alone,
But parting-pangs to miss,
And crowned and charioted, th' abyss to win,
And thus on all worlds waiting, thunder in,
And taste the conqueror's bliss!

'Tis gone. Like August streams
Dwindling, in distance dies the less'ning roar;
The sparks are dead; the red rear lights no more
Send back their warning gleams.
Far down in Kandahar the whistles blow,
And now I lose them in Himal'yan snow—
The train rolls on in dreams.

The Seer

"Courage!" he whispered through his stiffening lips.
"I scent the flood, I see the beckoning tips
Of wind-blown palms." They cried, "O phantom-curst,
Mock not thy brethren when they die of thirst."

"Cool, cool, the crisping wave!" His dying moan
Was still but this. They left him there alone,
And groping hopeless through the wastes around,
The wind-blown palm-trees by the waters found.

"Alas!" they cried then, "While we drink our fill,
Our seer died thirsting." "Nay, the desert still
Bounds us," one said, "And but this trampled stream
Our lips have drunk: his, of his crystal dream."



Foreknown

"O thou that comest past the stars,
And past the utmost bound that bars
Us from unguessed infinity,
What hast thou seen along the road,
What marvels vast thy pathway strewed,
The long, long path to Calvary?"

"I saw the sower down his brown fields striding,
Fling wide the fruitful grain,
I saw the foxes in the old tombs hiding
By white towns veiled in rain."

"But this we that are men may see—
Did no great Voices speak with thee
A journeying to Jerusalem?
Thou that hast walked with Life and Death
In lands forbid to mortal breath,
What secrets were unloosed of them?"

"I heard the games the children's feet were winging
There in your markets met,
I heard the price two tiny birds were bringing—
That I remember yet."

"Nay, Lord, but show some wonder done,
Now, or in times ere time begun,
That flashes worth Thy Deity;
Light with a look a new-made world,
Or stay the swift hours onward whirled,
Till we forget Gethsemane."

"I knew, I knew, ere Eden's rose was blowing,
Prick of the twisted thorn—
The nails, the darkness, and the warm blood flowing,
I knew—and I was born."

The Anteroom

The door behind us closed,
Silent as sunset; for no alien sound
May break the stillness of that peace profound
Where, round the hall disposed,
The mothers lay; and some with hands outspread,
And some with warm arms round a childish head,
'Neath shadowy arches dozed.

They lay down worn and old,
As Time had left them; but the while they slept
A silent change across their faces crept,
Like young day's rose of gold
On the gray cheeks of night, and slumbers sooth
All the old glories of their vanished youth
Restored them manifold.

No shrinéd saints were they,
But meekly ranged them with that womanhood
On earth too weary to be greatly good,
And toiling on alway,
Their chiefest heaven, their hopes of being blest,
Grew but to this—that God would grant them rest—
And now at rest they lay.

The lofty roof was dim,
If roof there was; for wisps and shapes of things
With wind-blown hair and clouds of moving wings
High overhead did swim
When I looked up, and sometimes childlike eyes
Looked down upon me, grave, and strangely wise,
Under a halo's rim.

Three pictured windows showed
Morning, and eve, and moonlit midnight high,
Each storied true, but each a dying sky—
And where the softest glowed,
That saffron window named, "The Star of Even,"
A stairway clomb; they said it clomb to heaven,
And once was angels' road.

Fireflies lit up the gloom,
And drowsy winds went waving to and fro
A thousand roses now about to blow,
And in the dusky room
—Or room or garden—round each sleeper's bed
Dream-faces shone, and golden visions spread,
Woven in Slumber's loom.

And yet not wholly still
Was that still place, nor always wrapped in sleep
Those quiet shapes; their folded trances deep
They loosed and left at will;
Sometimes a child laughed; once a bell struck one,
And a voice cried, "The night is just begun,
Sleep on—your dreams fulfil."

So one by one they win
At last to heaven; for evermore there went
Through the vast room a thrill, a wonderment—
I heard a song begin,
Remote, unspeakable; a door swung wide,
And some glad mother waking, glorified,
Arose and entered in.

Sycamores

They love no crowded forest dark,
 They climb no mountains high,
But ranged along the pleasant vale
 Where shining waters lie,
Their brown coats curling open show
 A silvery undergleam,
Like the white limbs of laughing boys
 Half ready for the stream.

What if they yield no harvests sweet,
 Nor massive timbers sound,
And all their summer leafage casts
 But scanty shade around;
Their slender boughs with zephyrs dance,
 Their young leaves laugh in tune,
And there's no lad in all the land
 Knows better when 'tis June.

They come from groves of Arcady,
 Or some lost Land of Mirth,
That Work-a-day and Gain and Greed
 May not possess the earth,
And though they neither toil nor spin,
 Nor fruitful duties pay,
They also serve, mayhap, who help
 The world keep holiday.

On an Old Violin

Men say Stradivari made it,
 Here's the faded name—
And that Paganini played it,
 At his topmost fame.
But an unguessed chisel shaped it,
Unseen fingers moved the bow;
Magic not in mortal hands,
Powers, no human skill commands,
Life and love and sorrow blended
 In this worn shell long ago.

For this gem of joiner's art
Was of old a pine-tree's heart,
Harkening, hoarding wild-wood music
 In a living treasury—
Yon deep chords our senses shaking
Like some mighty harp-strings breaking
 (Now 'tis Sarasate's bow),
Are not art, but memory—
 So makes moan a falling tree.

Long it lay in castle wall,
Roofing feast and funeral,
Looking down on smoking torches,
Griefs that chill, and love that scorches,
 Peace and turmoil, sleep and strife;
Shouts of men, and maidens' laughter,
Song, and sighs that tremble after,
These the dusky roof-tree heard,
 Listening at the doors of life.

One red night the castle fell,
And the charred beam came to dwell
 In a peasant's cabin lowly,
Builded in the chimney-breast;
 Watched and heard the mother slowly
Croon a tired child to rest;
Pondered long on simple arts
Known alone to loving hearts,
Till that day the master spied it,
 Plucked it forth and shaved it thin,
Smoothed it, shaped it, stringed and tried it,
 And, behold! the violin.

'Twas not Stradivari made it,
No, nor Paganini played it,
 All alone; 'tis these, I ween,
Living, learning, loving, serving,
 Make a man or violin.



Pan O'Dreams

"What dost thou here where the shivering reeds
Lean over the dark marsh streams,
O piper a-piping thy haunting tunes
That dwindle and die on the dim lagoons
In the waning autumn's gleams?"
And the piper said under his flying hair,
"I set me my nets for dreams."

"But do the dreams fly on the open marsh
By daylight? And these thy snares,
Where are they?" He lifted his stately head
And his lean brown fingers fluttering spread
And played; and the by-gone airs
Blew out of a summer of long ago
And lands where a lost love fares

Till June came back o'er the whispering reeds
And pranked them in emerald plumes—
(Oh, the sky was blue and the day was long!)
And the bubbling notes of the starling's song
Rang over the elder-blooms,
And the dark marsh waters in ripples ran
Far down in the grassy glooms.

Then he softlier blew, and the low winds woke
That whimper about the sills
And the doors, when the wintry day is done,
And the warmth and joy are gone with the sun,
Gone down behind lonely hills—
When a hush falls over the children's glee
At dusk in the desolate hills.

And never a lane nor a laughing brook
By memory's meadows lay,
But the cunning notes found a track to it,
And my gladdening heart won back to it
By the piper's path that day,
For his are the keys of the world that is
And worlds that are worlds away.

And under the tunes came a tingling joy
That ran in my veins like wine—
"O piper, thy nets are most strange," I cried,
"And their meshes of golden memories tied,
But the things you snare are mine."
"My pipes are the heart of the world," he said,
"And dreams that are mine are thine."

Aleutian

Mists are his heavens. His moon behind a veil,
Unseen, her silvern circle slowly fills;
How fair in twilight pale
Are shy young stars down vistas in the hills
He knows not, nor the golden pomps of June,
When high o'erhead by shimmering bastions hoary
The sun in tranquil glory
Goes westering down some star-deep, blue lagoon;
But spindrift clouds his island outlines blur,
And long rains round him purr,
And ceaseless fogs, of Asian sea winds borne,
Swirl in, till night and noon
Are writ in one dull Arctic character,
Alike of shadow and of shining shorn.

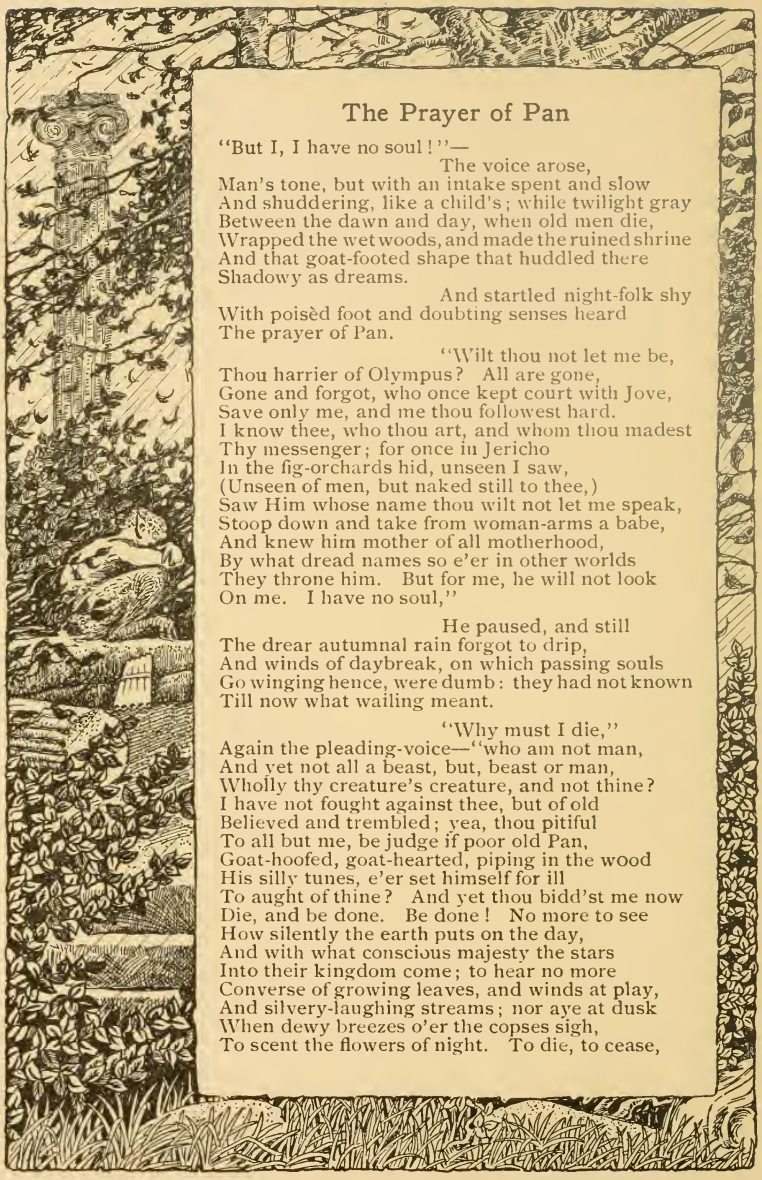
Our tumult of the street,
Trample of feet,
Harsh roaring wheels and throbbing bells and cries,
To that swart islander were strangest dream—
Save when the tempest flies,
No mightier voices rise
Than barking seal-herds, or the sea-bird's scream,
All round his isles; and tales of tower and dome
Seem but a shipwrecked stranger's rude romancing
To him whose vagrant home
Is a light kayak mid the whitecaps dancing
In wild seas west of Nome.

For him no ripe fields rustle,
Waiting the fruitful bustle
Of harvest-scenes, nor autumn orchards bending
Beneath their painted burdens, perfume lending
To every passing air—
'Tis his to reap the unsown waters wide,
To strike the salmon swift in swinging sea,
Silent as foam across the foam to glide
Among the basking seals before they flee;
And if no garden fair
Allure his care,
No bit of heavenly blue in blossoms molden,
Nor roses red nor golden
Gladden his path, yet sometimes round the year
A great hand sweeps the curtains from his skies,
And spired auroras dazzling up the sphere
Foreshow him Paradise.

No race behind him lies,
Rooted in memories,
No shining deeds with such rare art rehearsed
That men are nigh forgetting
The jewel in the setting—
His lonely soul is versed
In one scant tongue; a few rough shards of speech
Serve all his need; but when beneath the moon
That still sets sidewise down the frozen beach,
In the dim hut he hears his wife's low croon,
His first-born's gurgling laugh, well knows he then
That song, that laughter, speaks all tongues of men.

What if to him the storied past is dumb,
Or, finding speech, but stirs a troubled doubting?
Can Caesar's ashes warm the fingers numb?
What helps Achilles' shouting,
Or hinders, Helen's pouting,
Far by Scamander and the doomèd wall,
To him whose spear-long barque of lightest leather
'Mid ghostly icebergs towering Andes-tall,
Must Arctic tempests weather?

Nay, 'tis not Art alone,
Nor sad-eyed centuries of weary lore,
Nor rugged northern zone,
With hard-earned harvests wrung from watery floor,
Makes men or mars; in Heaven's eternal plan
'Tis living only makes a man a man.

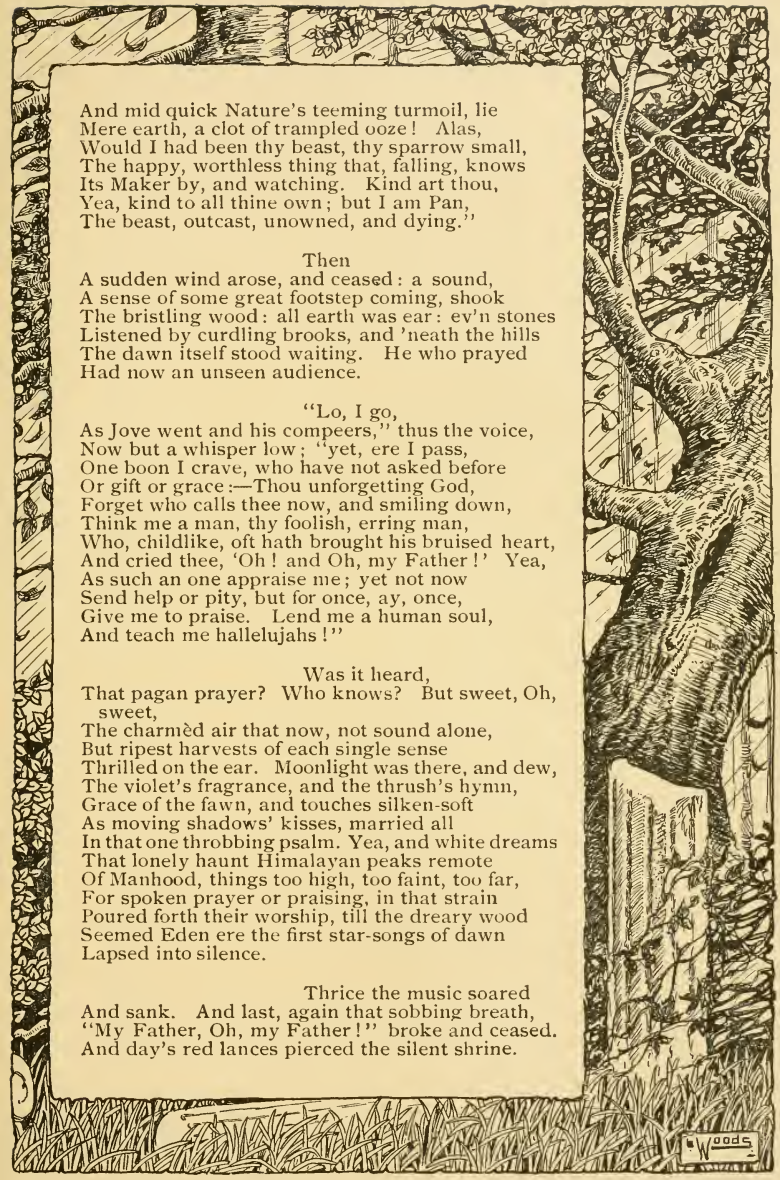


The Prayer of Pan

"But I, I have no soul!"—
The voice arose,
Man's tone, but with an intake spent and slow
And shuddering, like a child's; while twilight gray
Between the dawn and day, when old men die,
Wrapped the wet woods, and made the ruined shrine
And that goat-footed shape that huddled there
Shadowy as dreams.
And startled night-folk shy
With poisèd foot and doubting senses heard
The prayer of Pan.

"Wilt thou not let me be,
Thou harrier of Olympus? All are gone,
Gone and forgot, who once kept court with Jove,
Save only me, and me thou followest hard.
I know thee, who thou art, and whom thou madest
Thy messenger; for once in Jericho
In the fig-orchards hid, unseen I saw,
(Unseen of men, but naked still to thee,)
Saw Him whose name thou wilt not let me speak,
Stoop down and take from woman-arms a babe,
And knew him mother of all motherhood,
By what dread names so e'er in other worlds
They throne him. But for me, he will not look
On me. I have no soul,"
He paused, and still
The drear autumnal rain forgot to drip,
And winds of daybreak, on which passing souls
Go winging hence, were dumb: they had not known
Till now what wailing meant.

"Why must I die,"
Again the pleading-voice—"who am not man,
And yet not all a beast, but, beast or man,
Wholly thy creature's creature, and not thine?
I have not fought against thee, but of old
Believed and trembled; yea, thou pitiful
To all but me, be judge if poor old Pan,
Goat-hoofed, goat-hearted, piping in the wood
His silly tunes, e'er set himself for ill
To aught of thine? And yet thou bidd'st me now
Die, and be done. Be done! No more to see
How silently the earth puts on the day,
And with what conscious majesty the stars
Into their kingdom come; to hear no more
Converse of growing leaves, and winds at play,
And silvery-laughing streams; nor aye at dusk
When dewy breezes o'er the copses sigh,
To scent the flowers of night. To die, to cease,



And mid quick Nature's teeming turmoil, lie
Mere earth, a clot of trampled ooze! Alas,
Would I had been thy beast, thy sparrow small,
The happy, worthless thing that, falling, knows
Its Maker by, and watching. Kind art thou,
Yea, kind to all thine own; but I am Pan,
The beast, outcast, unowned, and dying."

Then
A sudden wind arose, and ceased: a sound,
A sense of some great footstep coming, shook
The bristling wood: all earth was ear: ev'n stones
Listened by curdling brooks, and 'neath the hills
The dawn itself stood waiting. He who prayed
Had now an unseen audience.

"Lo, I go,
As Jove went and his compeers," thus the voice,
Now but a whisper low; "yet, ere I pass,
One boon I crave, who have not asked before
Or gift or grace:—Thou unforgetting God,
Forget who calls thee now, and smiling down,
Think me a man, thy foolish, erring man,
Who, childlike, oft hath brought his bruised heart,
And cried thee, 'Oh! and Oh, my Father!' Yea,
As such an one appraise me; yet not now
Send help or pity, but for once, ay, once,
Give me to praise. Lend me a human soul,
And teach me hallelujahs!"

Was it heard,
That pagan prayer? Who knows? But sweet, Oh, sweet,
The charmèd air that now, not sound alone,
But ripest harvests of each single sense
Thrilled on the ear. Moonlight was there, and dew,
The violet's fragrance, and the thrush's hymn,
Grace of the fawn, and touches silken-soft
As moving shadows' kisses, married all
In that one throbbing psalm. Yea, and white dreams
That lonely haunt Himalayan peaks remote
Of Manhood, things too high, too faint, too far,
For spoken prayer or praising, in that strain
Poured forth their worship, till the dreary wood
Seemed Eden ere the first star-songs of dawn
Lapsed into silence.

Thrice the music soared
And sank. And last, again that sobbing breath,
"My Father, Oh, my Father!" broke and ceased.
And day's red lances pierced the silent shrine.

The House of Broken Swords

On one side marshes met the snarling sea,
And on the other three gaunt mountain peaks
Shot up 'mid screaming eagles; and between,
Beetling above an inky tarn, upclomb
That hostelry.
Cloud-high it loomed, and dark
As Amazonian forests. Far o'erhead
Its shadowy roof, sometimes but spindrift dim,
Sometimes was heaven, with lucent twilight skies
Besprent with stars; and round each echoing hall
From carven ambrys quaint, old storied arms
Blazoned the walls. There on Goliath's blade
Goliath's blood still rusted; there sea-born
Excalibur flaunted his wizard hilt,
And Soldan's yataghan and Richard's brand
Hung with the baton that in Caesar's grasp
Dispeopled nations.
But the loftiest nave
In that strange house was hung with broken swords,
Whereof the chiefest three had shields beneath
Scrolled each with shining names. One shield was his
Who long time humbled Rome, and one, blood-red,
Recalled the Corsican; and last, a shield
Now wet with old men's tears, proclaimed the chief
Whose ramparts linger 'mid Virginian pines.
Untenanted the place, to casual eyes,
And silent; but anon began afar
Onset of armèd feet, and thunders rolled,

(Thunders or battle), and a hand unseen
Lifted a veil; and Lo! a marching host
Swept through the aisles, while on amazèd ears
Sea-like uprose the Prayer of Beaten Men.

"We are the fallen, who with helpless faces
Hid in the dust, in stiffening ruin lay,
Felt the hoofs beat, and heard the rattling traces
As o'er us drove the chariots of the fray.

"We are the fallen, who by ramparts gory
Awaiting death, heard the far shouts begin,
And with our last glance glimpsed the victor's glory
For which we died, but dying might not win.

"We were but men. Always our eyes were holden,
We could not read the dark that walled us round,
Nor deem our futile plans with thine enfolden—
We fought, not knowing God was on the ground.

"Give us our own; and though in realms eternal
The potsherd and the pot, belike, are one,
Make our old world to know that with supernal
Powers we are matched, and by the stars o'erthrown.

"Aye, grant our ears to hear the foolish praising
Of men—old voices of our lost home-land,
Or else, the gateways of this dim world raising,
Give us our swords again, and hold thy hand."

Thus prayed they; and no spoken answer fell,
But whoso watched, saw the dark roof again
Flash into sudden heaven aglow with stars
That aimed their light straight as the glance of God,
On those three shields beneath the broken swords.

The Road Builder

Nature to him had lent
In meek abandonment
Her Titan powers, and loosed her wonted laws;
His clock-timed lightnings clove the lonely hills
Close on the echoes of his clinking drills,
And when the mountain's breast
His mimic earthquakes ploughed, in wondrous pause
One leap below the crest,
He fixed in stable rest
The granite avalanche; and there his ringing
Steel ribands wind, and mile-long cargoes ride,
And little children singing
Go by, where once young eagles yellow-eyed
Screamed from their eyries clinging

He seemed to us the Spirit of To-day
Exultingly incarnate; even his play
Sat on him tense as sunlight on a sword;
No soft Delilah-dream
With white arms clinging clogged his soul's endeavor,
Nor for vain worlds that seem,
But worlds that are, we thought his strength was poured
As if the Now and Here meant all Forever.
Not his the backward glance of sad-eyed seer,
But front of pioneer,
Head up, eyes kindling, face to face with life,
And high heart leaping with the joy of strife—
Poets for song, and priests for prayers and creeds,
But to us watching here,
Song, prayers, and life, love, all he wrought in deeds.

But blind, blind hearts still are we at the best!
We had not guessed
What thoughts far-ranging hived in that keen brain;
Sometimes a little wonder,
We hid, our praises under,
Sometimes his whirling words smote us in vain,
And to his shining look
Turned we bewildered by the thing he spoke—
"John was a Voice," he laughed once, "I, a hand
Cast up the King's highway across the land,
Or ere He comes again."
"Nay, man, What King?" we cried him. "All for gold
Your labors manifold;
The fields, the mines, to mart,
The world to fetch and carry—this your part."
And smiling still, above his figured chart
He bent him as of old.

But that wild night he died,
Watching his couch beside,
Faint and afar we heard a sudden rolling
Of giant wheels, and great bells booming, tolling,
Till the air trembled, and the solid ground;
It grew, it thundered past,
Whelming all senses in the sense of sound,
And, hushing wonder to an awe profound,
Away in distance and to silence drew;
And faint and far across horizons vast
A long, low whistle blew.
And our road builder, when
That mighty passing ceased, had ceased from men.

Earth-man we thought him once, with chain and rod—
That night, that way, a prophet went to God.

The Old Porch

We did not ask in those old days
If it looked east or west,
To our young eyes the landscape there
Of all the world was best;
The steps led out to hills of home,
Known fields and meadows low
With childhood's morning glory lit—
What more was there to know?

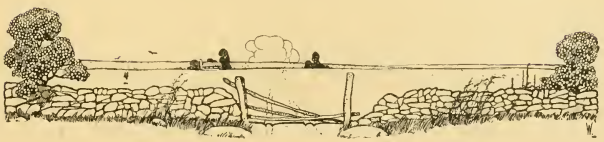
The little wild things loved it, too,
The pewee and the wren—
The squirrel from the oak near by
Would frolic there, and when
Our laughing Patty's harmless broom
Had chased him to his limb,
He'd sit and scold at her as if
The porch belonged to him.

The slim, unpainted pillars gray,
The roof where mosses met,
The wabbly banisters, the bench,
The battered croquet-set,
I see them all, and all embowered
When June was at its height,
With rose-bloom thick as clustered stars
Some keen December night.

There father's home-made chair all day
Its waiting arms outspread,
But might not clasp that sturdy shape
Till daylight's tasks were sped.
Then in the dusk came mother's voice
And Patty's low replies—
The honeysuckle's breath around,
The young moon in the skies.

And if at times our glances caught
A glimpse of marble pale
Against the drooping cedars dark
Beyond the garden's rail,
It brought no aching thoughts of those
Who there in quiet lay,
For even our vanished ones we felt
Were still not far away.

They say the place is haunted now,
But if the tale were true——
If Heaven would but a single hour
Of those old times renew,
Not all the gain nor ease nor power
That cheats a world of men
Could keep me; on my knees I'd go
To that old porch again.



The Three Trails

They all led out of my Vale of Youth,
A white path over the hill,
A whispering stream, and a spire of smoke
In the windless dawning chill.

The white road led to the Towers of Gain,
The river, to Far Romance,
But the way of the smoke was lost, I thought,
In the void of heaven's expanse.

Now I am back from the Towers of Gain,
And little I brought away—
My river is long gone dry; but here
In the windless twilight gray

Is the heavenward trail of old; and soon
With my pilgrim-staff in hand,
I go, a pillar of smoke my guide,
To look for the Promised Land.

The Bellringers

"Ye shall mind him well," was the voice they heard
"With a hidden and skilled upholding;
Ye shall strike your tunes to a haunting word
In his ears, till the deeps of life are stirred,
And the marvel of his unfolding
Soul in your sight shall be precious to see;
Now, hasten; and rich shall your service be."

Irland and Hilph and Gwernalo,
These were the three that were sent—
Irland was grave and strong and slow,
But Hilph ever dancing went—
One had a bell of crystal sheen,
And one had a bell of gold,
And one had a lily-bell, all green,
With a strange name round it scrolled.

And they came to a sad-eyed silent man
With a surgeon's wonderful fingers
For the scalpel keen and the curved trepan—
But his dreams were dead ere his fame began,
Though the memory in him lingers
Of the pulse and lift of the poet's heart
God asked, and he gave, for the healer's art.
Irland would strike a sound of war
That rolled with a stirring tone
Like drum-beats, sometimes heard afar
By the haunted man alone;
Sometimes it came at the table grim
Where his needful task was done,
And mazed his soul, and thrilled in him
In tumult of triumphs won.

The fame of his art blew over the land,
But anon came a whisper stealing
Of stranger things than the skill of his hand—
Men said he would pause and listening stand
In the midst of perilous dealing,
And under his touch, in their gropings dim,
The sick folk babbled of heavenly hymn.

Not half might careless mortals dream
Of the mirth Hilph's music told,
But far on high the living stream
When it hears that bell of gold,
Its rippling waters backward rears
As if it would climb the hill,
And never a praying seraph hears
And keeps at his praying still.

But the wonder grew, and the whispered speech
At his back, under bent hands hiding—
What then? Could his fingers but healing reach,
Or the help that a sick child's eyes beseech,
Little cared he for men's deriding;
And while the world pitied a great man mad,
He wrought and he listened and grew more glad—
Till on a time when Gwernalo
With his lily-bell of green
'Gan slowly swing it to and fro
With a ringing cry between,
And that strange word around it scrolled
Leaped into a living flame,
And earth no more the man might hold
When the heavens called his new name.



The Fall of the Oak

With front majestic o'er his fellows lifted,
Three hundred years he watched the dawn come in.
Turn its long lances on the night-mists drifted,
And slope by slope the world to daylight win.

The gaunt gray figure at his vitals striking
Seems but an infant to the ancient tree
Whose youth looked down on grandsons of the Viking
And rough newcomers from an unknown sea.

He saw Winonah's wigwams careless cluster
Where now the corn-shocks camp in ordered files,
And heard low thunders of the bisons' muster
Where clouds of sheep now fleck the fertile miles.

Much, much has passed him down the ages ranging,
Old names of men, old towns and states and wars—
The fields, the ways, the very earth went changing—
He only stood—he and the steadfast stars.

And now, alas! low, low behind him wheeling
Sinks the red sun he shall not see go down,
And his own crest, in strangest ruin reeling,
Droops not the slowlier for its long renown.

The woods look on in silent grief attending,
The winds no mourning make around his stem—
Too weak their wailing for a giant's ending—
The oak's own downfall is his requiem,

And now begins; his great heart-strings are breaking;
His branches tremble; now his mighty head
He stoops, and then, the hillside round him shaking,
With whirlwind roar falls crashing prone and dead.

And watched afar by many a frowning column
The woodman homeward moves while shadows run,
And leaves behind him in the twilight solemn
Three hundred years of life and work undone.

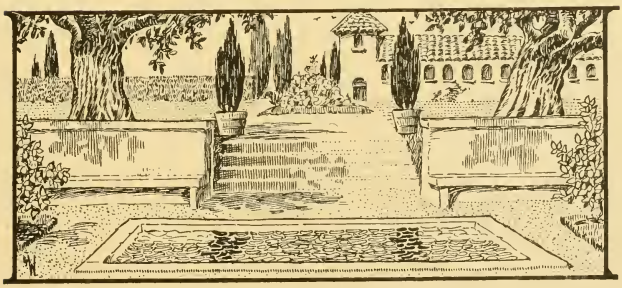
In San Na-zaro

In San Na-zaro's gardens
The nightingales are still—
They know a sweeter voice than theirs
Is passing from the hill,
And the white rose and the crimson
Their heads are bending low—
For roses lie on Lucia's breast,
And Lucia does not know—
Pale roses, all too lightly clasped
In hands as cold as snow.

In San Na-zaro's cloisters,
By one dim altar-light,
The gray-haired monks are met to judge
Their youngest anchorite;
For Hugo knelt in open hall
When passing-prayers were read,
And kissed with white and shaking lips
The still face of the dead—
"The love I might not give to Life
I give to Death," he said.

The monks of San Na-zaro
 Their doom have spoken now—
They cannot know when breaking hearts
 Assoil a broken vow,
But in the funeral chamber
 Amid the dim-lit gloom
The pale buds laid on Lucia's breast
 Unfold in perfect bloom,
And that calm smile the dying lips
 Had lost, the dead resume.

And in Na-zaro's gardens
 Now when the night is dim,
Young Hugo comes, and nightingales
 Have songs alone for him,
And the white rose and the crimson
 All down their bending rows
Lean close to touch his claspèd hands
 And whisper, as he goes,
"Thy kiss hath waked a heart in heaven;
 She knows now; Lucia knows."



Abbot Boniface

Wrinkled, ascetic, and grim,
With little of fault or whim,
And little of sunny and human mould
Where the seeds of liking might find a hold—
Such was Father Boniface,
The abbot of rich old Allonby Chase,
And nigh fourscore years old.

From a life spent in the thick
Of feud with the heretick,
Or in ruling with strong hand small and great
Inside or in sight of the abbey gate,
He came at the last to die,
And, meek enough now, in chapel must lie
In pomp he used to hate.

In heaven they gave him a guide,
Who, shining there at his side,
Said, "Now to the great ones first shall we seek,
Here are Fathers Syrian, Spanish, Greek,
And Fathers, of course, of Rome;
And some from the uttermost kingdoms come,
And strange, unchurchly clique."

The peace on the abbot's face
At this was lessened a space,
But he said no word, and the angel tall
Lead on till they came to a garden wall—
The towers of the place were seven,
And it lay on the sunset side of heaven
Where twilight glories fall.

'Twas a fair place and a wide,
And garnished on every side
With riot of bloom, and the birds and the bees
Kept tune to the tinkle of streams at ease,
And many a gurgling shout
From the dimpled crew in the grass rang out
High on the listening breeze.

Then hard by the open gate
The abbot cried aloud, "Wait,
I pray thee, O angel, and quickly tell
What bright ones are these?" And he said, "Here dwell
The souls of the children small
Who died in the wreck of their fathers' fall,
Too young to know they fell."

"Yon lad at play by the brook
Was Korah's son: when they took
White Ashkelon's towers, and the people slew,
Like doves, all the little souls this way flew;
The child of the Canaanite
Has a welcome here in the high God's sight
As warm as has the Jew."

"Sayest thou! They are orphans, then,"
Said Boniface; and again,
"May an old man enter? And childless too?"
And then at the answer, eagerly drew
Nigh an Amalekite maid
Of three, who alone by a rose-tree played.
And letting the rose leaves through

Pink fingers, watching his face,
She laughed with a baby grace,
And held out her arms. And the guide went on
To the great—if great ones he sought—alone.
But Boniface in the thick
Of the heathen seed and the heretick
Found heaven and heartsease won.

Grandmother's Hair

It has not the glory of red, red gold,
Nor the glimmer of ebon tresses,
And she wears it now in as plain a fold
As the kerchiefs of Quaker dresses.
But I wonder still, as I mark it there
In the glow of the lamps illuming,
If the earth has another flower as fair
As the head of an old saint blooming.

They say it was brown when the years were young,
With a ripple of sunlight braided,
And the shimm'ring coils on her shoulders hung—
But the sunlight long ago faded,
And slowly the moonlight came in its place,
Till the gray and the dark locks twining,
Grew into a silvery sign of grace
In the gleam of the white hairs shining.

There are maidens yet 'neath the old roof-tree—
There are Aileen, Anna, and Cary,
And naught do they lack that a maid must be
That's dainty and modest and merry,
And still there's a tinkle of soft guitars
On the porches when shadows darken,
And a whispered plea 'neath the music's bars
For an ear that will bend to hearken.

And grandmother smiles at the broken tune—
 Do they think she does not remember?
There are tints of the dawn that died in June
 In the sunsets of chill December,
And not with the day is the moon made new,
 But she grows with the growing even,
And the best of our morning dreams come true
 In the twilight that's nearest heaven.

And so she sits there in the lamplight clear
 With a smile for the children's greeting,
And she dreams at times of the parting near,
 And again, of the coming meeting,
But we, as we gaze on the lustrous hair,
 Read the truth in its marvel hoary,
And know that the blesséd may sometimes wear,
 Ere they leave us, their crowns of glory.

Unaware

"Children, tell me who was she
Dancing with you on the lea?
That bright maid of mien beguiling,
Sometimes sad and sometimes smiling,
But with witching sweetness wiling
 All your hearts away—
Was it elfin maid, or human,
Princess fay, or budding woman,
 Led your games to-day?"
Then again I heard her laughter,
And the children dancing after
 Said not yea or nay.

"Who was with you, lovers twain,
Yonder in the moonlit lane?
Young she seemed and maiden-slender,
Yet might Psyche nothing mend her
Phantom grace, nor Venus lend her
Aught of beauty new—
Once I watched her bend and whisper—
Did she in that speaking lisp her
Name and fame to you?"
"Nay," the lovers said in wonder,
"None was in the rose-lane yonder.
None beside us two."

"Mother, in whose brooding eyes
Shine low lights of Paradise,
When the sunset skies of amber
Paint the west, and in the chamber
Sleepy-head at last would clamber
Up the waiting knee,
Round ye both her white arms twining
Standeth one in raiment shining,
Wondrous fair to see—
Can this be the Mary-mother?"
Soft she answered, "Here's no other
But my child and me."

"Soldier, in thy stern delight
Headlong charging down the fight,
Who is she above you gliding
Like an ancient goddess guiding
Heroes forth, and still dividing
With them triumphs won?

Not more brave was Trojan Hector,
Not more proud the Trojan's victor,
Far by Ilion."
"Vex me not with phantom woman,"
Cried the soldier, "Lo, the foeman
Wavers! Ride, ride on!"

Seeking still and still distraught,
To the sage my quest I brought,
"Tell me, father, what this haunting
Vision is, this changing, taunting,
Woman shape, the world enchanting,
Yet that none confess;
Is it trick of necromancy,
Or some bright mirage of fancy,
Gilding men's distress?"
Something far beyond him eyeing,
"That," the wise man answered sighing,
"That is Happiness."

The End of the Road

There was never a voice proclaimed the place,
There was never a guard around it,
Just a corner turned in the Lane of Life,
And, ere I could marvel, I found it—
A wicket-gate in a moldering wall
With a wild vine over it springing,
And a cowlèd shape on the low stone seat
By the wicket sitting and singing.
"Swart men of Araby, Pilgrim and Paladin,
Join in the goodly array—
Knights of Plantagenet, horsemen of Saladin—
All the world crowding the way."

In wonder I turned, and over the road
I had trodden, a mist was stooping,
And in it was thunder of viewless hoofs,
Tumultuous myriads, trooping
To that one portal: The ways of the world
From afar and anear came to it,
And the gatekeeper sang as, one by one,
He ushered the travellers through it.
"Hither rode Launcelot, parted from Guinever—
Princes and Beggarmen bold—
Some like a Charlemagne, riding in miniver,
Some in their gaberdines old."

Then opened the gate, and lilies I saw
In the cool grass, nodding and waving,
A murmur of bees was borne on the breeze,
A tinkle of rivulets laving
Velvety banks where the riders reclined
Asleep in the untroubled weather—
The beggar and king, the sage and the knave,
And the mother and child, together.
"Light, light, ye gentlemen, cease from your wandering,
Won is the ultimate quest,
Sages from counseling, fools from your maundering,
Rest ye well. Silence is best."

But when I would enter, that keeper gray
With a skeleton finger stayed me.
"Not yet," he whispered—His finger was cold,
And the look of his eye affrayed me—
"'Twas Fancy untimely showed thee the Gate,
(She only the Future may borrow),
Go, now; the feet of the galloping Hours
Shall bring thee again—and to-morrow."

"Rest ye now soberly, striving is done for you,
Finished the Chase and Flight—
If ye were winners or losers is one for you,
Rode ye for Wrong or for Right."

Blue Grass

Not for men to reap or sow,
It's as wild and wide as snow—
Red men found it here untended
With its seed-stalks all up-ended
Lance-like, countless, plumed and splendid;
And that fairy soldier-show
Still it keeps in sunny dingle
Where the elm tree stands up single
Sentry down the old fence-row—
Still it holds its mimic muster
Where the oak tree cronies cluster,
And the sunlight winks down on it when the limbs swing to and fro.

Nature's homespun this, for wear
Changeless round the changing year;
Other vesture has she rarer,
Roses for a day are fairer,
Autumn woods awhile may share her
Favor, yet is naught so dear
As this tufted velvet sprangled,
Knee-deep, crisply sweet, and spangled
Thick with flawless dewdrops clear;
Drifting wintry snows may hide it,
Drouth and parching winds betide it,
But it keeps its dewy freshness though the world around is sere.

Blue they call it, but it's green,
Touched with palest silver sheen—
All things love it; sleek herds grazing,
Red-wings o'er it anthems raising,
Most of all, some fond eye gazing
That has long in exile been.
Even the steep it mantles, showing
Subtler curves than waters flowing
Down some giant ledge unseen,
And from many a desert dreary
Homesick hearts and eyes aweary
Turn, as schoolboys turn to water, to the blue grass cool and clean.

At the Grave of Poe

Was there no green valley by Auber's tarn
Or slope in the woods of Weir,
No sepulchre dim in the cypress glade
Where long ago lost Ulalume was laid,
Awaiting her lover's bier—
That they buried a prince of Poet's Land
In a street-side graveyard drear—
Was all that was left him of Poet's Land
But a shrunken grass-plot sere?

'Tis there in the noon men quivering feel
The shattering car-wheel sound,
And there in the night upon tense-strung ears
The scintillant arc-light's glistering spears

Hiss into the darkness round,
And never is peace till the pitying snows
Heal over the aching ground—
Till the sooth and silence of night-long snows
Lie deep on the echoing ground.

Do ye well, O People, to rate him dim
In the firmaments of home,
When over wide oceans he shines on high
An unsetting star of the Western sky,
Far up in the purple dome
That glows with the "glory that once was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome?"

Nay, your city is old and wide and fair,
And many a column tall
And figures of bronze with a laurelled name
Shows the pledges proud ye have given to Fame,
But the proudest of them all
Is the square gray stone with its carven harp
That stands by the old church wall—
Is the name and face and the carven harp
By the old Westminster wall.



Greatheart's Heaven

Said Sir Greatheart to his Angel, "I can dig and cleave and hew,
Build my navies, cities, kingdoms, as I will;
Yon dominion lost in Eden now is well-nigh won anew.
And I hold the earth and sea my vassals still."

"Yet thou whisp'rest me of heaven, with its music and its peace—
What have these to do with men at clanging noon?
Let the psalms be for the weary, for the beaten, battles cease,
But for me thy summons cometh over soon."

"With my works I praise my Maker, ships and bridges are my song,
And for harps, a thousand thousand engines' beat,
As I hang mine iron highways in the clouds the cliffs along,
Or let in on bison-ranges seas of wheat."

"Aye, and give me but To-morrow, and I'll shout back from the pole,
One to-morrow, and I'll flaunt me high in air
Till the eagle lags below me, and the thunder-wheels that roll
Now but ruin, through the skies my ships shall bear."

"But what's left to venture yonder, in that finished world and fine,
What's to win that still may challenge courage stern?
Do they take their manhood with them who this leaping life resign?
Heaven? Yes; but not at noon we thither turn."

And the Angel said, "At bed-time pleads the child
among his blocks,
'Wait a bit: I build a castle, tall and strong!'
Thou bridge-builder, whom the spider 'mid his flying
cables mocks,
Think not thy heaven is only rest and song."

"It is writ God's servants serve him, there as here. The
morning star
Waits a ruler who shall be of Adam's kind,
And when Emmanuel rideth forth to Armageddon's
war,
Mightier powers than earth can muster march behind."

"Fear thou not. If doing please thee, there are deeds
beyond the sun,
High adventures that shall long outlast his light,
And this truth shall settle in thee, ere thy heaven is well
begun,
That up there, and here, and always, Right is Might."

Behind the Scenes

"Begin now; the curtain is gone up," he said—
'Twas the old drama, Life. In their places
Ranged angels above me and devils below,
And between them the comforting faces

Of men—In cloud armies, the quick and the dead
Leaning forth with eyes gleaming to mind me,
And I saw, and saw not, as one in a dream,
And again rose a whisper behind me,

"Now, why dost thou linger?" But I in amaze
Cried aloud to the cloud-faces shining,
"Where's God?" And quick answer came, "Back there behind,
With the book, all thy life for thee lining."

The Stream that Came to Town

It was born far off in a shimmering pool,
It was cradled in emerald meadows,
And never a stain on its waters grew
In all the green tangle it gurgled through,
But the dapple of innocent shadows—
Of a bird or willow-bough, up in the blue,
Or the cattle that came through the morning dew,
And the slow-footed plow-teams, two by two,
To drink—with their drinking shadows.

Now its fetid waters flow
Fat and slow,
All its banks a grimy wall,
All its skies a smoky pall,
Gone its sparkle, song, and all,
Vanished long ago.

It had not a thing of its own to hide,
And the pools in the whispering rushes,
The muskrats' door with their bubbles embossed,
And ripples would tell it, if Reynard crossed
To a frolic at dusk in the bushes—
And the shyest of wood-spells, softlier tossed
On the wimpling flood than a leaf in a frost,
Was babbled in moonlit hushes.

Who knows what dark secrets drown
In these brown
Waves that loll from bank to bank,
Wallowing in a jellied tank,
'Neath the windows, rank on rank,
Dead eyes staring down?

It felt the quick thrill of the life around—
There was home-land, and every child growing
In all the green valley, it knew by name.
And never a step on the foot-bridge came,
But the waters guessed where it was going,
With a good-will as careless of outside fame
As the morning stars are of the sluggard's blame,
Or spring is, of war-news blowing.

Not these strange scenes it desired,
Not this huddled landscape spired—
Country-born and crystal-pure,
Downward drawn by dread allure,
Here it lies—a squalid sewer,
In its own filth mired.

In the Passage

"Mark you his look," they said,
"How rapt, how fond! Fair on him, still at sea.
Foregleams the haven where he longs to be."
Yet though aright they read
His dying eyes, 'twas he alone that saw
The wind-swept curtains down a silent flaw
Slant toward the candle's head.

And when his lips grown chill
Half-shaped a whisper strange, they said, "He greets
Celestial escorts now, and welcome meets
This side the shining Hill";
And he the while, far off along a lane
Of dreams, went whistling home the cows again
By meadows dusk and still.

They thought in that hushed room
Almost they heard the heavenly voices call
As at the last he listened toward the wall;
But outside, in the bloom
Of passing summer, in his passing ear
The cricket-choir sang vespers quaint and clear,
And early piped him home.

Stoker

In the darkness under the world,
His roof is the coal-dust cloud o'erhead,
And dust is the floor beneath him spread,
And the mole in garden sod
Knows more of the sweet daylight than he
Who swings his shovel in bunker three,
Or tugs at the furnace rod.

Down deeper than engine purrs and swings,
On the grimy under side of things,
He leaps when the bugles blow
And great guns thunder in sudden fight;
And then, pent there in the choking night,
Shifts the coal heaps to and fro.

He hath visions of deeds 'twere good to do—
Of a man's part cleanly played clean through
Aloft in the open sun—
But his to sweat by the furnace door,
And reel at last to the reeling floor
When his captain's fight is won.

Other dreams come to him yet more dear—
Of God's wide sky, and a sea glass-clear,
And a salt wind, cool, cool, cool!
To him of the pit a breath divine
That his shrivelled soul drinks in like wine,
In a dream-draught rich and full.

Small is his meed if the old flag win,
And if it lose—then a louder din,
A rent in the iron wall,
And Death swirls in through the jagged gate,
And the stoker finds in the hold his fate
And coffin and grave and all.

God keep thee, shipmate; and some good day
May He from heaven's bridge stoop and say,
"O man by the doors of hell,
Come up! For the stifling toil is past,
And the good ship rides in port at last;
All's over and all is well;
Come up to the deck of the world!"

The Path to the Spring

The stepping-stones led out,
An ancient line well-worn in years of yore,
And winding onward from the old yard door,
Each stone with grass about,
Like a gray isle in silent seas of green,
Passed the quaint summer-house, the chosen scene
Of rest from romp and rout,
And old, slow-flowing tales uncankered yet by doubt.

Then came the swinging gate,
Opening on meadows dim, horizon wide
To our young eyes, where on the further side
Did hills more wondrous wait
Than e'er kissed heaven in Arcady. Alack!
The path turned there, and now no other track
In these gray days and late
Finds the lost lands of old the sky-line of our fate.

A big hackberry spread
High o'er the path, still to one loyal mind
And memory keen, lone monarch of his kind;
And then, with creeping dread
To childish hearts, the cavern in the hill,
Lair of we knew not what, gaped on us still,
As oft with hurrying tread
And fearful backward look along the path we sped,

To tumble round the turn,
And lo! the spring. Then while Aunt Lucy, bent
Above her wash-tubs, scolding welcome lent,
Slim Chloe left her churn,
And smiling wide, to young lips round the pool
The brown gourd tilted dripping, pure, and cool—
Such draft not Hebe's urn
Could yield, nor Dian's thirst so innocently burn.

But far, and far apart
We've journeyed since. Some walk the streets of gold,
And some, still further from the paths of old,
Plod on with patient heart;
All things they see in one vast circle bound,
And life, mayhap, shall some time circle round,
Somewhere some new dawn dart
New day, new life, and they down some new spring-path start.

To a Young Hospital Nurse

What witchery is here?—
You with the happy eyes, and fawn's footfall
That frolics still, forgetful, down the hall—
Did unkind fortune drear
Lure you to this grim house of helplessness?
Or you your May-bloom prentice to distress,
O morning vision dear?

One altar, one alone,
May claim such sacrifice: if Duty call,
Obey—that still small Voice leads stars, and all—
But not Golconda's zone,
Nor all Fame trumpets of, or Fancy paints,
Can buy lost youth—that dream the wistful saints
Remember on the throne.

Here is no filial care
That love or kinship owes: not even a friend
Lifts you his weary eyes as now you bend—
You whose rebellious hair,
New-coiled above the white nape, woman-wise,
Back into girlhood's floating tresses flies
At even a touch of air.

Is there no older hand,
No heart long tutored of its own dull grief,
To soothe another's woes, and win relief?
O child, the Promised Land
You tread unknowing, all too soon is gone—
Twilight comes twice, but once—but once!—the dawn
Reddens Youth's golden strand.

Then seize the budding chance
While shimmering spider-wheels still wear the dew,
And joy's a-leap, and all the world is new;
'Tis Heaven makes young Romance
Life's blossom-time, and never drouth nor frost
Falls on the flowers but means some harvest lost—
Go, little maid, go dance!

The Track-Walker

With head bent low and shoulders stooped,
And slow, home-keeping eye
Fixed on the rails, a silent shape,
The track-walker goes by.

A five-mile strip of grimy stones,
Edged with an iron band,
Is all his world. June snows that drift
In daisies o'er the land

He heeds not, nor red autumn flakes
That rustle down the air—
Rail, bolt, and bar to keep in place—
This is his only care.

He quits his task three steps before
The rocking train shoots past,
Then stoops, while still the pebbles whirl,
To make a loose bolt fast.

The ruin hid in sudden flood,
Slow rust and silent frost
'Tis his to fend; and men ride by
In cushioned ease, at cost

Of his long march and lonely watch,
Nor give a backward thought
To the bent shape and plodding feet
Whose toil their safety bought.

Morn is to him a sentry beat
To thread through sun and rain,
His noon a place to turn and start
Back into night again.

A ceaseless traveller all his days,
New lands he ne'er may roam—
In yonder orchard is his house,
Here 'twixt the rails, his home.

Unmourned, unmissed, he dies to find
(The last lone miles all trod)
That whoso walks a railway track
Aright—has walked with God.

In the Colorado Canon

Altair is white, and Betelguese is gold,
Men say, and vast! though but to sage's eye;
But this red gulf that gapes to either sky
Would whelm half heaven; and down these slopes, of old
God digged his sunsets, and still on their bold
Ramparts, waste-heaps of night and morning lie,
Purpled and pearled and tinct in every dye
With which Auroras mock at Artic cold.

Potter! Who shapest thus with glory's hand
The desert clay, thou kindlest in my heart
Wild dreams—too thrilling sweet aught else to be!—
I, whom thou gavest to feel, to understand,
And be, in some far fashion, what thou art—
I too am clay—what wilt thou make of me?



The Mauser Bullet's Song

Ghost of dead winds am I,
A sigh, a wailing,
Wraith of a lullaby
In sultry noons through Cuban jungles blown
Where the swart Spaniard fiercely holds his own—
I am the trailing
Whisper that moans o'er Modder's reefs of sand
When Cronje's troopers make their dauntless stand,
All unavailing.

Out of the dark of trees
Far away lying,
Swifter than homing bees
Come I, last minstrel of the foughten field,
With magic song, of meaning unrevealed,
New joys implying:
Sirens of old lured sailors o'er the main,
And siren I along Tugela's plain
Whistle the dying.

Mine is a spell ye own—
Though far behind you
With childish days have flown
The low-toned sanctities of cradle-tune,
In me again old vesper voices croon,
Old echoes mind you
Of vanished lips that soothed your fears away—
Soldier, whose lips the last "good night!" shall say
When I shall find you?

Who knows? Thin, thin, and keen
As a star's chanting,
Thrid I the battle scene—
Mayhap, a canticle of heavenly breath,
Mayhap, forerunner of soft-footed Death,
That whispers, panting,
Of new worlds waiting with a welcome dear,
But in the message hides a touch of fear,
Forever haunting.

The Song of the Grass

(*In the Soldiers' Cemetery at Arlington*)

Ye are many, ye are mighty, and your feet they trample hard—
Ye have trod the mountains under, and the sea,
The sea ye, too, have conquered, but within this quiet yard
It is I, the grass, am master; hark to me.

Ye have torn me in your marches, scarred me deep with hoof and heel,
And my dewy sward have rolled in dust and blood,
When amid the cannon-thunder e'en the forest seemed to reel,
And your battle shook the hillside where ye stood.

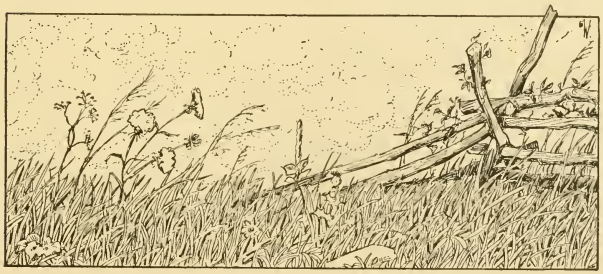
Were ye victors? 'Twas not Carthage won by Trasimene's lake,
Nor the Britons 'mid the wheat at Waterloo,
For my creeping, crowding legions from them both the field did take,
As I took the heights at Gettysburgh from you.

But I hate the battle fury as I hate the crawling sea,
With its wrinkled swinging tides that cannot cease;
Sweeter far to me the woodland where the dappled shadows be,
Or the graveyard with its lilies and its peace.

Nay, I will be done with mocking. O my masters, naught am I
But the clinging lowly grass about your feet,
Growing green and cool around you, tired eyes to satisfy.
And weaving, when all's done, your winding-sheet.

Sleep ye well! Men bring you roses, but they wither in the sun—
Bring them in the May with music and a sound,
As of old, of timèd footsteps; but when all the pomp is done,
In the stillness 'tis my small roots wrap you round,

Fold you close, and so will keep you till Potomac shall run dry,
And the stars go out like camp fires in the skies,
Till the shivering sea shall perish, and the huddling mountains fly,
And the judgment bugle blowing bids you rise.



At Emmaus

They did not know Him as they walked,
Their eyes were holden while they talked,
But when at home He brake the bread,
"It is the Lord!" they quickly said.

Wouldst thou know Christ? Make Him thy guest—
His heart-stone manner shows Him best.

Apollo's Song

(See also in *"A Dream of Gods"*)

Not on the earth he stood, but lifted up
High on a changeful cloud, now tinct with dawn,
Now gray as starless night on dreaming snows.
And if the cloud turned, or the god alone
Turned in his song, I know not, but methought
All the world-throng beheld him face to face.

Low breathed the deep beginning. None might say
Where Silence dipped her coasts in Song's sweet seas,
Or when we launched thereon. At once afloat
We found us, and to float on that full tide
Was bliss unknown. Nay, if Elysium lay
Beyond such seas, the great souls thither bound
Would loiter school-boy like along the way.
All senses now were swallowed up in one,
All thought, all feeling, aye, the soul itself
Sat in the ear; as when some city's throng
Stall, hall, and home, and market-place forsake
And joyful crowd the gates to crown their king,

Crowned in their hearts already. If the spell
Lay on us for an hour, or hour of years,
None knew; but all too soon the tuneful flood
Caressed us homeward, and our spirits touched
Once more the gray coasts of Reality.

So sang the god and ceased—or would have ceased
But for a passionate cry, born of a heart
Insatiate. "Lo, thy songs" (so rang the cry)
"Be all of heaven. Sing us, O God, the songs
Of men."
An instant then Apollo paused,
Laid down his lyre, his lissom fingers clasped
Behind him, and, a simple-hearted youth
Supreme in beauty, lifted up his voice
Again.
He sang of Youth and June; green fields
And dancing feet and velvet orchard floors
Pink with perfumèd snows; of bees and birds
And the shy tinkle of too-happy brooks
Wimpling among the roses. Then young Love
Moved through the music, and with him first came
The troubled note that, like the sombre lines
In imaged light, runs through all mortal joy.
Not this the sounding chant Olympus knew,
Nor a god singing; earthly bliss and grief
Mixed in these chords, an aching bliss, a grief
Dearer than half our joys. All human life
Flowed through the melody, and evermore
Echoing sighs; until at last the god
Leaving the palpable, in haunting strains
Too keen, too thrilling sweet for homesick hearts
To exile doomed, 'gan breathe of unsung hopes
And deep, unutterable dreams that are

The soul's blind fumbling at the breast of Fate
Here in Time's darkness. Then with sound of tears
Like the night rain in desolate Autumn woods
A broken cry went up, "Forbear, O God,
Forbear, lest thou shouldest slay us with thy song."

Backgrounds

"The play, the play's the thing!" Lord Hamlet, no.
The peopled and illimitable night
Hath mightier ghosts than Denmark's, and the light
That limns the upturned face of Romeo
Paints half a world of faces in its glow;
Arden hath untold lovers hid from sight
To Rosalind, and many a willing sprite
Unknown, unsummoned, waits on Prospero.
What else is watching in the dark behind?
Who knows when legions, angel, ghost, or djinn,
Shall break from out the backgrounds vast that bind
Our cramped horizon, and o'errun the scene,
Or God himself crash on us mummers blind,
And play be done, and life, life, life, begin!

Bethel-on-the-Hill

The naked walls no arches know,
No rich mosaic's pride,
But only time-stained moss without,
And light unstained inside;
No marble niches high o'erhead
Lift haloed saints to view,
But watch you well yon face; for here
The saints sit in the pew.

The men of old who chose the spot
Where these gray gables rise,
Had little thought what changes here
Would snare their children's eyes.
Yon outward sweep of vale and mount
Of old no glances drew—
The forest then possessed the land,
And hid the world from view.

But now like some rich tapestry
The summer slopes are spread,
Broidered in rustling green and gold
And looped with silver thread
That twinkles 'twixt the willow trees,
And hums a Sunday tune,
And Bob White, three wheat fields away,
Helps praise the Lord for June.

Were there no windows toward the west,
'Twere easier here to pray,
For look! See yonder fleet of clouds
Sail grandly up this way.
They move like ships in ports of home,
Beyond all fear of harm,
While far below their shadows glide
As big as half a farm.

"I lift mine eyes," the people sing—
Amen! I do; and straight
New wonders on the mountain grow,
A towering cliff, a gate,
Of carven snow—mayhap of pearl!
Alas! in other evens
I've seen it fade, or I might dream
That gleaming gate was heaven's.

What if these walls no arches know,
No pictured windows wide,
But only God's June world without,
And praying saints inside?
To this old hill, from altars thronged
And loneliest desert track,
The hearts that once have worshipped here
With fondest thoughts look back.

The world has many a road to God—
No lands where lost men roam
Lie so remote, so desolate,
But that there's some way home;
Yet some bright coasts on highways lie,
As free, as plain as day,
And Bethel stands by such a road,
And far, far on the way.

Voyagers

I bade two friends of mine farewell to-day.
One sailed at noon; and while the shores around
Echoed reverberant with mingled sound,
Voices and bells and iron-throated bray
Of enginery, the great ship moved away,
And less'ning outward, passed our vision's bound.
Then while her trail yet stained the skies, I found
A chamber where a wan-faced pilgrim lay,
Bound home. No voices stirred the tranquil air;
In silence loosed he from this alien sod,
And, smiling backward, forth alone did fare,
Yea, while we watched, Death's waiting decks had trod,
Sighed twice, and, ere we knew him gone, was there—
So near is Heaven, so short the road to God.

The Dreamer

"Come down!" we cried to him. "Leave off thy lonely
Watch on the mountain height;
Belike the foeman comes, and wilt thou only
Be missing from the fight?"

No word he answered, yet we knew when ended
The long day's doubtful war
We had not won had he left undefended
His lone outpost afar.

"Come down!" we cried again. "Our streams are failing.
What dost thou 'mid the stones
On the bare hillside? Hear the children wailing!
With thirst the whole earth groans."

"Drink, then!" he laughed to us, and rested glowing
Beside his well-used tools,
And down the rocks unprisoned fountains flowing
Sang into sudden pools.

Light, light of heart we deemed him, and a stranger
To great, soul-shaping cares,
Grief schooled him vainly, and he fronted danger
With songs instead of prayers.

He was not one of us. His rapt eyes, shining
Like moonlight veiled in showers,
Had the seer's vision, outward far divining
Horizons beyond ours.

We heard the waves break, he, small waters welling
In darkness 'neath the sod,
And what to us was but the night-wind swelling
He called the voice of God.

And oft when Sorrow sighed, or we in watches
Of Fear's long night our wrongs
Told in the dark, he 'wildered us with snatches
Of strange and haunting songs,

Our souls enthralling with a potence under
The music's ebb and flow,
Like far-blown echoes of the trumpet-thunder
That stormed walled Jericho.

But now a silence falls, and we awaken—
Dim is our dawn, and late!
The prophet-voice we thought a reed wind-shaken
Hath passed within the gate,

And our dull hearts now read aright the story
Our dreamer always knew—
Life's best is dreaming best, and heaven's own glory,
Man's dreams and God's come true.

Homesick

Like mushrooms huddled close, the roofs
Lean o'er the narrow street,
Where loose-clad, swarthy throngs go by
With click of sandaled feet;
A bullock cart here scrapes the wall,
And there a palanquin
Goes bobbing by with lacquered sides
That hide a mandarin.

All day I've jostled 'mid the crowd,
 All day mine ears have heard
Babble of trade and mirth and hate,
 And not one homelike word—
They look, they laugh, like humankind—
 Here, too, are night and day,
Labor and love and life and joy—
 But home's a world away!

What useless wares the pedlers cry,
 What uncouth dainties rare
I see, and nameless, painted fruits
 No other clime may share;
But oh! A winesap, rich and ripe,
 From far Virginian trees—
What like it ever grew by all
 These alien Eastern seas?

The winds of unknown odors breathe—
 Strange craft are on the stream;
I turn a wistful, doubting eye
 Even on the ruddy gleam
The sunset wastes on dusky junks
 And slant, outlandish sails—
Is this the gold the dying day
 Pours on my native vales?

O ye who strain with leaping heart
 Along the outward track,
God speed! But deeper, keener joy
 Is his who turns him back!
What sun soe'er may shine above,
 What stars or east or west,
The last low lights that guide us home
 Outdazzle all the rest.

Poets' Land

If it lie east of day,
Or west of utmost Hesper, who may know?
No buttressed highways past its borders go,
Nor smoke, nor foam-wakes trailing seaward, show
In any wind or weather,
How men come thither,
Nor sorcerer's red-writ chart enchanted hints the way.

But if its viewless portals
No foot may find, nor courage win the gate,
And for unguided mortals
Its phantom festivals inviolate
Fall on a timeless date,
Still is there solace—wingèd Fancy hath
Her olden power, and keeps the magic key—
Lo! at her touch, an open door, a path,
And straight 'tis Arcady!

Ancient its empery, and many a name,
Itself a song, resounds its varied fame
In countless tongues of old worlds and the new—
Eden, Elysium, and Hesperides,
Tatarian Xanadu,
And isled Atlantis in her sundown seas:
And other names than these
It claims, and classic zones
Murmuring of caves with Sibyl-voices ringing
And pensive Vestals at dim altars singing
Portents, in tones
Half-syllabled, fantastical as dreams,—
And Delphic groves whose haunted branches swinging
Twinkle the noonday's beams.

There Lady Cristabel,
Watched of all lovers, thrids the midnight wood
With keen, delicious pricklings in the blood
That elfin perils spell:
Childe Roland to his tower
In Poets' Land, comes at the destined hour,
And pilgrims thither, deep in bosky vale
Pausing, with eyes that glisten,
To Sorrow's Vespers listen,
As in the glade young Keats's nightingale
Anigh wakes angels' envy: wars are not,
And all old ills forgot
In Avalon,
And there King Arthur mourns nor queen nor throne,
Nor his Round Table gone,
Nor far-blown joustings once at castled Camelot;
But happy Tempests still on Prosper's isle
Maroon the Race of Man,
Wondering and doubting which may best beguile
Men's cares—Miranda's beauty, Ariel's wile,
Or moon-calf Caliban.

These regions builded
High Lords of Song: even as the first World-maker
With his sole word, the world
Fashioned and lit, that may no more betake her
To rayless Chaos, nor, unbid, forsake her
Star-candled circle whirled,
So, what God's will did,

Poets essay; with song empeople space,
And star infinity with brain-born Things
That bulk and move majestical as kings,
Till earthlier kings give place,
And Fancy's heirs alone immortal bide:
Yea, many a prince
Is throned and gone and nigh forgotten, since
The world crowned Hamlet; and what griefs beside,
In all the storied tide
Of royal woes in past or passing years,
Seem to us half so deep as maundering old
King Lear's?

Not all for Poets' Land,
Nor for the mighty Shapes and Shades that dwell
Far down its charmèd gardens, flows the song:
Chieflier to those belong
The glory, who have framed with Music's spell
These ageless regions, and their hero band:
For when did honey-tongued Aeneas bleed,
Or what with Dido plead,
Other than Vergil bade? And Abdiel,
Aye, and the greatest of great angels, each
Speaks but Miltonian speech,
As Dante's art unlocks or Heaven or Hell;
And though each puppet crowned
In Shakspere's pageantry, straightway discloses
A royal mood, and wears his dignity
Kingly as any he
Of antique ancestry and reign renowned,
Yet one great hand disposes
Cæsar and knave and clown, coffin and throne—
And Shakspere rules alone.

O Earth, O little Earth!
Unnoticed atomy 'mid giant stars,
Gather to thee thy voice,
Yea, bid thy whirlwinds muster, and rejoice
Till thy far-rolling mirth
Beats thunderous music on Time's outmost bars;
Hide not thy head for any suns that be,
For Heaven hath shared with thee
Its princeling, Man, sprung of the common sod,
Yet instinct with the skies!
Whose poet's eyes,
Dim with the anguish of all mortal years,
And poet's heart that aches with griefs and fears,
Celestial enterprise
Invites and dares, till paths th' Eternal trod,
His heir, in wilful wise
Childlike and Godlike, tries—
Stumbling, but following, following his great
Father, God.

In the New Congressional Library

He trod the Hall of Captains; o'er him high
Were shining names; the Macedonian bold,
Rome's mightiest, mightier he of Carthage old,
And later lights new-risen in War's wild sky
Dazzled upon him. Long with wistful eye
The soldier sought a name nowhere enrolled
On those bright walls; but after, in the cold
Capitol wandering, came by chance anigh

A western window—there Potomac lay
Rimmed with Virginian hills, and in the sun
Far off, a pillared mansion; then the gray,
Worn warrior straight uncovered, and his one
Unwounded arm went up the old, old way
For his lost Captain—*Lee of Arlington.*

The Puritan

Of soul severe and mien austere and sour,
In blunt disdain, he leaves to fops and girls
Life's gentler arts, misranked with scents and curls;
But when some doom-bell booms the fateful hour,
Strides to the front, untaught to budge or cower,
And Hampden's speech in Freedom's onset whirls,
While Cromwell's arm a throne to ruin hurls
And guides a realm unkinged with kingly power.
And hark yon voice! Milton, ye say, and blind?
Then let the loneliest Lords of Song give place,
And hail, whom all lords hail, The Puritan—
Stern tribe that throne the right above the kind,
And, building altars to Jehovah's face
In new worlds wide, rebuilt the name of Man.

"How They Grow"

Mark well yon slender stalk of green
Just springing forth the clods between
While April airs are chilly;
With filmy leaflets closely curled,
It looks a tiny banner furled,
But soon will be a lily,

A sparrow's weight would bend it low,
A little flood would overflow,
A little frost would kill it;
And e'en when grown it reaches up
And lifts to heaven a heavenly cup,
A little dew would fill it.

Yet all the power that Newton saw
Bind in one vast and equal law
Pebble and planet glowing
Cannot, when Spring is come, keep hid
The lily 'neath its coverlid,
Nor stay its buds from blowing.

It knows no labor but to bloom—
God's darling need no cares assume,
No tribute pay but beauty;
It cannot but live in the light,
And still to keep its garments white
Is nature more than duty.

What if to-morrow it must die?
Is there no Easter in the sky
To earth's dead blossoms given?
Yon world would forfeit half its bliss
If what is sweetest here in this
Brief springtime had no heaven.

"Much more, O ye of little faith!"—
(This is the word the Master saith)
"Much more to you His will is!"
—Nay, but it were enough for me
Could I, O Master! only be
To Thee as are thy lilies.

When Amy Went

When Amy went to London,
I mind me still the bells,
The shouts and cries, and tearful eyes,
Swift feet, and short farewells
Around us 'neath the station roof
With long trains rolling slow—
When Amy went to London
One little year ago.

There were a dozen coaches—
They say there was an earl
Went lolling down to London town
With our shy Devon girl;
It was the fairest time o' year,
When maids and roses blow—
And Amy went to London
In June a year ago.

She's gone again from Devon—
But hushed were all the bells,
No shouting throng nor clanging gong
Broke on our last farewells;
A single sound was in the room,
A weeping long and low—
When winsome Amy left us
At dawn a week ago.

And still it's June with roses
Abloom, and still the world
Rolls up and down to London town
On clanging journeys whirled;
But that last silent parting
Has left us endless woe—
And Amy went to heaven
A long, long time ago.

The Dandelion

Unnamed among the garden walls,
Unknown in Beauty's bower,
It blooms, and cares not which it be,
Bright weed or homely flower;
Yet brave as any red-cross knight,
And modest as a lass is,
It might be Jeanne d'Arc of buds,
Or Galahad of grasses.

The rose for it no envy knows,
The lily feels no pity;
Unminded in the meadows green,
Undaunted in the city,
It blazes in the skirts of Spring
With grass-blades round it twining,
As if a sun-beam should take root
And bloom instead of shining.

And when its little day is done,
On rounded column slender,
Triumphant rises in its place
A silvery, silken splendor,
A wondrous, wavering, winged thing,
Free the free winds to fly on—
It is the flower's immortal part,
Soul of the dandelion.

The Frogs in April

Not for the world's delight
In the wet April night
Ye lift your litanies, O tuneless choir,
To one high note and shrill
Piping your own wild will,
From your dark lodgings in the moss and mire.

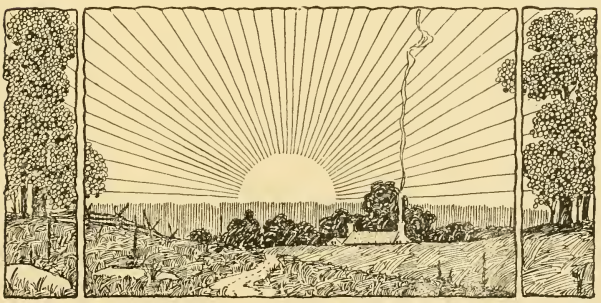
No poet-voices praise
The ringing notes ye raise;
Nay, Chanticleer himself doth sweetlier sound
His farmyard trumpet clear
When first the dawn is near,
And gaping milkmaids make their morning round.

Yet never golden bell
Did gladder tidings tell
On the still night-air o'er a moon-lit town
Than is the tale ye bring,
O prophets of the spring,
Chirping of April 'mid the meadows brown.

Your artless anthems range
Along the stops of change—
"The snows are gone," ye pipe, "and blue-birds come.
Time's at the dewy turn
When dandelions burn,
And in yon bare boughs soon the bees will hum."

Pipe, then, your vernal theme,
Pipe on, though fond eyes gleam
'Mid your keen chorals through a mist of tears,
For with your notes come back
Old things we love, but lack,
And dear dead faces out of vanished years.

Aye, but to hear ye hymn
Once more in meadows dim,
God's saints mayhap, shall cease from heavenly mirth,
And listen on the wall
With longing looks let fall,
And sighing say, "'Tis spring on our old earth."



The Motorman

Swathed to the eyes, with armored hands
That may not lose their hold
On the steel reins that guide his car,
For all the stinging cold,
'Mid griding wheels and trampling feet
And harsh gongs clanging near,
On his own road unswerving drives
Our modern charioteer.

The nameless he of old who drove
Afield with Diomed,
Or side by side with Cæsar's self
Some Roman Triumph led,
No stouter heart nor manlier task
Could boast, than he must own
With whom the busy world today
Goes riding up and down.

Not his in wastes of rolling foam
To choose his vagrant way,
Nor yet to thunder through the land
Still westward day by day,
But in his glass pen, six by three,
To thread one narrow street
Through day and night and months and years,
And then—the trip repeat.

He turns the crank and starts, and stops,
And starts, the whole day long—
But let those hands that turn alway
Once turn that handle wrong,
And heaped-up ruin clogs the street,
And mayhap careless men
Who rode but now close at his back
Will never ride again.

He sees the smiling folk that throng
The play-house portals wide,
Or old Saint Andrews' ivied porch,
And passes by—outside;
And rattling down the creaking rails,
He stamps his aching feet,
And in his weary soul half hopes
His heaven may have no street.

Ride on, O man unnamed, unknown!
No hero deeds design;
Still heed the gong, and ceaseless watch
All down the crowded line,
Till One who marks the humble worth,
Unsung, unnoticed here,
Shall say, "The Lord hath need of thee,
Run in, O charioteer!"

The River Road

'Twas the road we went to school
Down a pathway dim and cool
Winding with the winding waters through the land of Long Ago,
And though far my feet may stray
From the regions where it lay,
Still I see its bosky mazes, and I hear the waters flow.

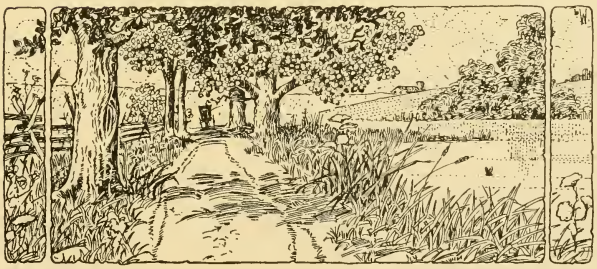
Sometimes, in our childish view,
That green road was river, too;
In our fancy we could hear it ripple down a stony hill.
And the curves that sidled round
Some great tree trunk on the ground
Were to us the pools and eddies where the stream lay deep and still.

There were beeches gray and old,
Carved with sprawling letters bold—
There the dogwood bush in blossom seemed a maid in bridal plumes,
And the gossip winds that sighed
Through the tangled thickets wide
Breathed of pawpaws up the hollows, or the wild grape's scented blooms.

On that road no trumpets blared
While a prince to crowning fared
With the plumed and spangled pageantry of kingdoms in his train,
But the rain-crow's troubled note
There in August noons would float,
As we watched the trampling legions of the silver-footed rain.

Woodfolk, too, in gray and brown,
That dim way went up and down;
There the raccoon on the fence-rails ambled off at our halloo,
Foxes barked in moonlit night,
And the young hares in our sight
Played at hide-and-seek with shadows in the twilight and the dew.

Some good day I'm going back
Up that unforgotten track;
I shall come, or they will bring me, round the bend at set of sun—
There's a gate will let me through,
As of old it used to do,
And the river road will bring me home when all my travel's done.



When the Door Opens

Sometimes it's early, early—
Or ever the farmhouse fires
Send up their incense pearly
In wavering morning spires,
When the sheep in nooks of the meadows
Are lying still,
And the old wheel dreams in the shadows
Behind the mill,
Then in the hush of the dawning, in the silvery mists and the dew,
God opens the door a little way, and little feet go through.

Sometimes it's when the wonder,
The hush and the dews have fled,
And noontide life pants under
The glare of the noon o'erhead,
When the plowman's furrows are creeping
Over the land,
Or rises the whir of the reaping
On every hand—
Or ever the swath is finished, or the long brown furrow is run,
The unseen door swings open wide, and the strong man's work is done.

Sometimes when the lamps of heaven
And the homelier lights of earth
Burn dim in the lonely even,
On high, or beside the hearth,
When the children go, and the cheery
Good nights are said,
And naught's by the fire but a weary
And bowing head—
Then opens the door where all roads end, or run they east or west,
And child and man and a child again go in and are at rest.

The Red Winged Starling

He haunts no forest dim—
Hedgerows are not for him,
Nor upland wolds that hear the plovers call,
But where dank meadows dream
Ribboned with many a stream,
'Mid swinging grasses swings his grass-built hall.

Tall elders o'er it spread
Their clusters wide, wine-red,
Of berries small, and water-lilies rest
Their chins upon their leaves
To watch him as he weaves
The slender blades that stay his rocking nest.

The muskrats' highways go
Beneath his portico;
His brooding dame may still her chamber keep,
And mark with quiet eye
The marsh-hen's chicks go by,
Or field-mice dance in grassy jungles deep.

What if wild things are told
Of redwing bands of old?
Little we heed the far-off, plaintive tale
When in his ecstasy
His epaulets and he
Flash their June roundelays along the vale.

For that far-fluted tune
Through the ripe afternoon
Has in it hauntings of a wondrous sooth,
And with diviner powers
Than builded Ilion's towers
Rebuilds the kingdoms of long-vanished youth.

Headache Day

Oh, for the Orient archways,
The curtained tents of Shem,
Or even the Eskimo dugouts,
With tunnels down to them—
Oh, for a home with Robin
—Redbreast, or Hood—on floors
Of forests dim where ne'er is heard
The crash of swinging doors!

Here on this burning pillow,
Where lacing wrinkles feel,
Beneath a throbbing, helpless head,
Like fretwork of hot steel,
Where one thin shaft of sunlight
Pierces the darkness dim,
And shows me how, if I but move,
The sick walls reel and swim.

I've learned my lesson duly,
 I know each different clang
With which the down-stairs doors go shut—
 Each brings a different pang.
Now, listen! Hear those footsteps?
 That's little Joe once more
Darting across the sitting-room—
 Boom! That's the back hall door!

I dreamt a dream this morning—
 The *Oregon*, outside
My window cruising, as I thought,
 Let loose a full broadside;
Groaning I woke, and quickly
 Knew what my dreaming meant—
That boy was steaming through the house
 And firing as he went.

It helps me not to murmur,
 Or clench my hands in pain—
Who would have little folks go out
 And not come in again?—
And yet how vain the war talk
 Of ship and twelve-inch gun,
To him who lives where doors will slam—
 And has an eight years' son!

Oh, for the storied stillness
 Of white Alhambran halls,
A bamboo lodge in quaint Japan
 With wattled screens for walls—
Oh, for a quiet dwelling
 On any earthly shores
Where men no more have headache days,
 Or houses have no doors!

The Sawmill

No huge, dim wheels in silent majesty
Like a world turning,
No massive walls, no chimneys in the sky
Smoking and burning,
Only a rough shed in the lonely wood,
An engine creaking,
And yon fanged terror through the solitude
All day long shrieking—
That's the sawmill, whirling, shearing,
In its flashing anger tearing
Gnarled old trunks apart;
Woodland annals, oaken, tender,
Scrolled in long-grown circles slender
All these nameless years, must render
Now their inmost heart.

Balsamic odors rise along the air—
A sweet-gum mellow
Bleeds on the saw, and breathes a perfume rare;
The oak, his fellow
In like misfortune, not such kindness shows,
Though the steel wheeling
Through his warm heart, a little warmer grows
With kindred feeling.
Sodden heaps of sawdust cumber,
Leaning piles of rawest lumber
Zigzag o'er the ground;
Still the blade goes shaping, swording
Into use the woodland's hoarding,
Girder, scantling, beam and boarding,
Four-square, straight and sound.

What dreams were done when these great hearts
were still!
Winds that would wrestle
With the lone pine all night on yonder hill.
Some outland vessel
Feigned to his hopes, himself her tallest mast,
Dragon-wings wearing,
And driving onward down strange waters, past
Wild isles of daring.
Dream is done and voyage over,
Here lies low the would-be rover
In the trampled yard;
All his waves are waste-heaps dusty,
All his ship, the log-car rusty,
And from his wild islands must he
Evermore be barred.

Not all is lost: these trunks down loftier aisles
Shall reassemble,
Where the old sunlight on them richlier smiles,
And pipes that tremble
With wild-wood memories, haunted stops shall blow
Till bees are humming
High in the treetops, and white clusters grow,
And June is coming.
But the sunset whistle's blowing,
And yon fateful wheel is slowing,
Slowing—slowing—still.
Come away; let Silence mend her
Raveled woof, and Darkness lend her
Healing here, till Dian bend her
Young bow o'er the hill.

Tybee's Bell

The curtained moon far down a lane
 Of cloudy walls uneven
Gleamed like a transom light above
 A dark side door in heaven
As in we swung on Tybee Bar,
 A faint swell with us bringing,
And heard the one slow, dreaming stroke
 Of Tybee buoy bell ringing.

'Twas our own wake that rang the bell—
 Not now a clanging warning,
But sweet as village chimes across
 Blown June and Sabbath morning,
And yet the sadness of the sea,
 The dark, the wan mists rolling,
Stole on our hearts, in that one note
 Along the twilight tolling.

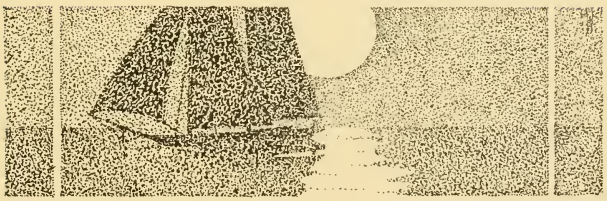
We thought all angry coasts were by—
 Grim Hatteras was behind us,
And naught in Tybee's tawny floods
 Found we of ill to mind us.
What ailed the bell? Did ancient use
 So well its message master
That even the babble of its dreams
 Could only ring disaster?

Ah, not alone for pilgrim ships
 That tone of haunting sorrow,
But for bright things that might not be,
 And hopes that had no morrow—

To ring some golden triumph in,
Some foolish joy to heighten,
Or, chiming calm as passing prayers,
Some mortal grief to lighten,

That was the dream of Tybee's bell.
Alas! In thousand steeples
Its fellows clang of life, love, joy,
High o'er the shouting peoples,
But this lone voice, chained in the flood
In rising tides or falling,
Knows but the leper cry, "Sheer off!
Sheer off! Pass by me!" calling.

O faithful friend, when, with the seas,
Has passed thine ancient guarding,
Somewhere may thy best dreams denied
Come true; and thy rewarding
Be, far within some happy coasts,
Across the stormless weather,
Foremost of all, to catch good news,
And ring wide heaven together.



The Old School House

Over the crumbling walls
A wild vine wanders,
Under the roof all day
A brown owl ponders,
Rabbits at twilight play
Among the grasses
Inside the playground—once
For lads and lasses.

Yet 'tis a school house still,
Though now new teachers
Set here the daily tasks
For shy wood-creatures;
Here chipmunks sit erect
To say their graces,
Or wash with velvet paws
Brown velvet faces.

Over the door the wren
Her four eggs hiding,
Soon all her crumbs will be
By four dividing,
Squirrels, too, have their sums,
For all their gadding—
Shellbarks and chinkapins
And acorns adding.

Where once the window was
Long legged spiders
Work out geometry
Without dividers,
And sparrows in the dust
(When they're not fighting)
Do rows of tracks they call
Spencerian writing.

Here, too, the holidays
Through the long daytime,
Come, as they came to us,
Recess and play-time,
And the old ruin rings
From floor to rafter
With the gay quips of birds
The bunnies' laughter.

The Lilies' Hymn

Midnight and Spring and Sharon in its glory
Lay round me musing in the starlight dim,
And wrapped in mem'ries of the Old, Old Story,
I slept; and dreaming, heard the Lilies' Hymn.

Is it not ours to bask in sheltered spaces
Down sunlit borders by the garden wall,
Nor feel like night-dews on our lifted faces
The tinkling fountain's wind-blown waters fall.

For us the fields where truant streamlets wander,
Our straggling cohorts know nor rank nor file;
We envy not the great stars wheeling yonder,
A word made them: God made us with a smile.

Wild lilies we, by men unmarked, untended,
In careless clusters set 'mid grasses blithe,
The oxen's hoofbeats tread us down unfended,
Nor can our sweetness stay to-morrow's scythe.

Yet are we blest above the queenliest roses—
Today to grow; tomorrow, all unvexed,
To fade; then when this little lifetime closes
To bloom immortal in the Master's text.

The Light-Ship

She lies far out along the bar,
A ghost by day, by night a star
That sways and swings and dips;
Though chained, she knows no anchored ease—
Though tides are full and fresh the breeze,
She rides, but may not sail the seas,
This sentinel of ships:
Hers but to watch by ruin's lair,
And lift her warning light in air.

Her sides are oak of triple strength,
Her mast a pine-tree's sturdy length,
Unhelped of boom or spar
The lantern bears, her only sail;
Yet naked thus she dares the gale,
With plunging prow and buried rail,
Or breasts the breakers' war—
An amazon of courage high
Who may not fight and will not fly.

Her sister ships their wings have spread,
Perhaps by dark Magellan's head
Or on Ionian seas;
Dim Greenland's isles of ice they knew,
They sailed Hawaii's waters blue,
And Aden's shallows loitered through,
Along the dying breeze;
And she, in calms when cables slack,
May drift five fathoms out—and back.

Not hers in glassy bays to seem
A dream-bark mirrored in a dream,
Nor hers the joy to feel
Her black hull on and onward whirled,
The rush of winds, the waves upcurled
High o'er her bows, as round the world
She sweeps on bounding keel,
While ocean 'neath her laughs and swings,
And ropes are songs and sails are wings.

And yet no bulk of senseless stone
Is she, on some stern cliff alone—
A ship's heart in her beats;
She thrills to every tide that turns,
Her naked mast for canvas yearns,
And each proud timber in her spurns
The chain that still defeats
Her forward plunge, and holds her slave
Whose will is tameless as the wave.

She will not always fettered ride—
Some night at turning of the tide,
When God's great winds are out,
A lightning bolt her bonds will rive,
And she, unchained, alert, alive,
Will on her one mad voyage drive,
And, 'mid the mighty rout,
While heaven and earth commingled roar,
Pass—to be seen of men no more.

The Last Homing

"Good-night!" the pitying sun
Spake in his glory,
"O man, thy day is done,
And done thy story;
I on thy native hills
A while did mind thee—
Good-bye: to-morrow noon
I shall not find thee."
"Good-night!" the answer quickly came, "and if thou wilt, good-bye,
Who knows if when I come again I'll need thee in the sky?"

"Farewell!" the waters cried,
Mournfully flowing,
"Farewell!" the night-wind sighed,
Restlessly blowing.
"We that have lovers been
Part at the portal—
Pass, as thy fellows pass,
Adieu, O mortal."

Said he, "Be done with dirges now: go learn the whirlwind's song,
For ye shall shout it when I come, nor deem the waiting long."

"O Master, kind and true"—
So grasses twining
Down in the moss and dew
Whispered repining—
"Bitter the day will be
And sore the wonder
When our thick-crowding feet
Shall tread thee under!"
"Grow green and sweet, O friends," he cried, "and sometime where ye wave,
I'll come 'mid shining troops and say, "this green spot was my grave."

In Trinity Churchyard

In the churchyard at Trinity
They know 'tis night
Not by the lessening industry
And changing light,
But when men's footsteps somewhat faintlier sound
In the long stillnesses low in the ground
Rises a silvery tinkle
Of tiny springs that sprinkle
Their darkling music; and the sleepers know
'Tis night in Trinity.

In the churchyard at Trinity
When spring is near,
Not by the tender greenery
The low graves wear,
And hyacinths in pink and purple bloom
And bees and birds and sunlight and perfume—
But by the white roots hidden
That wrap them round unbidden
With clinging tendrils soft, the sleepers know
'Tis spring in Trinity.

Little they care in Trinity
If in the street
(Where trade's mad tides unceasingly
Commingling meet)
Swift fortune smiles, or riches that might dower
Golconda's princess vanish in an hour—
Whose name is fastest fading
Whose mosses most are shading
On the old gravestones—these the questions great
For men of Trinity.

They have not heard in Trinity
How the town grows,
Nor of that mountain majesty
Its sky-line shows;
Low in the grass they lie, and have no care
If the world deem their city foul or fair—
Not men nor ships nor money
They prize, but those few sunny
Hours that are daily theirs: in this agree
All men of Trinity.

The gentlefolk at Trinity
Inside the fence,
Still keep their ancient dignity
And consequence;
They know not how a man might fitlier fare
Than—when he's buried—to be buried there,
And 'mid congenial neighbors
Rest from his earthly labors
In that green island set in stormy seas,
The yard at Trinity.

On Tantramar

We showed him all the city's pride,
Our streets and towers and harbors wide,
Yet not for these his woodsman's eyes
Gleamed once with wonder or surprise;
He looked our latest marvels through
And heard more tongues than Babel knew
Unmoved; his homesick thoughts afar
Still roamed the shores of Tantramar.

But on the dusky bay by chance
Our Northman cast an upward glance,
And lo! across the fading blue
A silent wild-fowl phalanx drew,
And as he marked with face alight
Their ordered wheeling down the night,
"They came," we heard him sighing say,
"From Tantramar but yesterday!"

"On Tantramar" (and now his words
Ranged freely as his vanished birds),
"Like night-clouds driving in from sea,
The wild-fowl gather countlessly;
Their myriads paint the marshes brown,
Their wings outroar your clanging town,
For days; and then 'twixt sun and sun
The call comes, and their hosts are gone."

"On Tantramar the marshes spread,
Once in the sunset ruby red,
Now daily wear a dimmer tone;
The ice-rim round the pools has grown,
And soon, where now the ripples play,
The fox's foot shall careless stray,
And hares their moonlit revels keep
On snow-piled Tantramar asleep."

"Then, then we heap the hearthstone high,
As kin and clansmen gather nigh,
Good cheer, good friends, and kindly word
Enliven then the festal board,
Or else far over wood and lake
Our snow-shoe bands their outing take,
And song and laughter tingle far
Across the fens of Tantramar."

We listened; and our clanging ways
Grew tame, when thus we heard him praise
The wilds, for us uncharted yet,
Wherein his eager youth was set;
For though we boast of storied art,
'Tis nature's touch still rules the heart,
And a bird's flight may help unbar
Our path to some lost Tantramar.

The Village Street

People say the street was run
Long before a house was done—
With a tinkle, tankle, tinkle,
Ere the vesper stars did twinkle,
Or the night-dews 'gan to sprinkle
Thirsty grasses sweet,
Upward from the velvet meadows,
Homeward through the growing shadows,
Came the cattle's feet,
And the path where they would wander,
Winding here and wheeling yonder—
That is now the street.

That was years ago, they say,
But it runs the same today—
By the clanging smithy sweeping,
Past the gray church-pillars creeping,
Widening like a white pool sleeping
Round the hitching poles,
Where the sun-burned farmers dicker,
And old Bess and Dapple whicker
To their truant foals—
Thence it passes downward swerving
Toward the whisp'ring willows curving
Where the river rolls.

Changes come but slowly here—
One may see, this very year,
As of old, a grandame riding,
To the stile her sorrel guiding,
In her level basket hiding

Homely golden store,
And her newly starched sun-bonnet
Has a small blue-figure on it
As had those of yore;
Quaint is she, but wholly human,
Like a sweet, old-fashioned woman
Back in 'fifty-four.

More than careless eye may meet
Visits in this quiet street—
Here are dreams in open daytime,
Visions out of vanished play-time,
Youth and joy and budding May-time,
We had fancied done:
Yonder shouting Barefoot lusty
Paddling down the roadway dusty
Little thinks of one
Far away, who drops his trouble,
And, in dreams, the Barefoot's double,
Shares his foolish fun.

Aye, a-many ghosts go down
This dim street of Haunted Town—
Hearts that far afield were roaming
Hither turn them in the gloaming,
Like the white-winged pigeons homing,
Now no more to stray,
And if longing could unravel
Knitted life, and pilgrims travel
Paths of Yesterday,
We too o'er our faded meadows,
Homeward through the lonely shadows,
Glad would wend our way.

Laddie's Fishing

The oriole whistles his nesting song,
 The bees as they fondle the clover
Keep humming, "It's June, June!" all day long
 To the same note over and over.
The listening winds lift the chorus high
 Till the corn-blades rustle and quiver,
And a bit of a tune the lad's lips try
 As he hies away to the river.
The bees they are humming, "It's June, June, June!"
 And what is there more to be wishing
When Youth and the year together chime noon
 And Laddie is going a-fishing?

He casts him his line in the glassy pool
 At the foot of the gnarled old willow
And sitting there, dreams he is done with school—
 He's a hunter, or ploughs the billow;
But a sliver of bark comes floating by,
 And, not now of his fishing thinking,
He feigns it a ship, and the pebbles fly
 Till he has the enemy sinking.
The bees they keep humming, "It's June, it's June!"
 And what is there left to be wishing
When Youth and the year are chiming high noon,
 And Laddie is busy a-fishing?

A locust is singing in yonder vine—
 No! It is the reel that is whirring!
And something is tugging hard at the line
 That would set even old blood stirring.
Ah! There he leaps upward in silvery curve!
 He's a big one—hold hard and steady!
As he falls back, let the line sidewise swerve,
 And reel in—but always be ready!
The world all around him is June, glad June
 And what can there be to be wishing,
When the reel whirrs out its jubilant tune
 And Laddie is wild with the fishing?

But over the meadows a clear voice calls,
 It's Nannie, her turkey-broods cooping,
And out of the west as the twilight falls,
 The nighthawks come screaming and swooping.
Reel up, my lad, it is time to be done;
 And anon in the wayside grasses,
The gossipping rabbits like shadows run
 As the fisherman whistling passes.
Oh, Youth and Summer are over too soon,
 And somewhat is left to be wishing—
But fair in the young night shines a new moon,
 And Laddie is home from the fishing.

The Conjurer

Dim lies the dawn along the dozing pools
 That break in ripples round his silent feet
As to and fro, with lore not learned in schools
 He sways his wand and makes the spell complete.

Then at his bidding from their watery lair
 Bright spirits rise, in glistening mail arrayed,
Plough the clear stream, or flashing wheel in air
 Or downward plunge, by that mute spell betrayed.

Rebellious they; but in tense circles wide
 The quivering rod works out the master's will
Till, one by one, each mail-clad sprite beside
 The conjurer floats, subdued, but fluttering still.

"What have you caught?" at eve the children cry.
 The conjurer's shining eyes foreshew the truth;
"June have I caught," he laughs, "new world, new sky,
 And, for these tingling hours, mine own lost youth."

A Dream of Gods

"Choose ye whom ye will serve," I heard a cry,
And lo! I stood within a circling slope
Himalaya-high, whereon assembled stood
The earth's unnumbered nations. Race with Race
And People joined with People, still they spread,
Thick as wheat-ears on Manitoban plains,
Or mimic hosts that leap when volleying skies
Assail the sea. The eye no respite found,
No grateful interval; but far and near
The changeless scene withheld its wonted charm
Of wood and field and river. Nature now
Produced but Man, and all the visible world
Was faces.

Then appeared in midmost view
A walled arena, and I heard, or dreamed
I heard, a voice proclaim that men were come
To choose their gods: whereat a darkness slew
The white mid-noon, and sudden silence reigned
To break at last in thunder. Thrice it crashed
From cloudless skies; the dark to twilight wanned;
Vast shadows gloomed, and whisperings came and went,
And all hearts were as his who gasping counts
The sick eternities of dread between
Quick coming shocks of earthquake. But whoso
Shook off his terrors, was aware of One
That in the arena drove on wheels of fire.
And broad noonday returned, and mortal eyes
Looked deity i' the face.

Who this might be,
Mars, Thor, or Shiva, or that greater name
Before whose shrine the Carthaginian lad
Swore the deep oath that nigh unthronèd Rome,
I knew not; but all warrior hearts to him
Welcome and worship gave in battle-shouts
That shook the mountains. After, each in turn
Unfellowed from his sky, or East or West,
And sole in the arena, came the gods.
Came Jove and his Olympians, bibled all
In Homer's page; next, dreaming Shapes of Ind,
And that dark Pair the black-capped Persians chant
Where Behistun its triple record keeps,
Ormuzd and Ahriman; red Moloch came,
And Baal great, his overthrow forgot,
On Carmel, and the priests Elijah slew;
Then Dagon flashed his fish-scales; last drew near

Strange cat-faced Things by ancient Egypt shrined
Where that wise husbandman, the brooding Nile,
Sows a drowned land with life.
They came not now
Manlike to strive, each against each. Not so
Immortals vie. They but themselves outdid,
Not one the other; with uplifted hand
Made night, or led the astonished day from noon
Back to his vanished dew; bade the moon turn
The face she hides, and stars untimely rise;
Dragged comets backward by their blazing hair
Across the skies; called up the unborn years
And sowed young souls like snowflakes; Time and Death
And Fate together yoked, and drove them tame
As Venus' doves; showed themselves lords supreme
Of wind, wave, harvests, famine, fevers, wars,
Men, manners, kingdoms. All they did, the gods
Alone may utter.
Yet one deed divine
Would I rehearse. I heard Apollo sing.

Not on the earth he stood, but lifted up
High on a changeful cloud, now tinct with dawn,
Now gray as starless night on dreaming snows.
And if the cloud turned, or the god alone
Turned in his song, I know not, but methought
All the world-throng beheld him face to face.

Low breathed the deep beginning. None might say
Where Silence dipped her coasts in Song's sweet seas,
Or when we launched thereon. At once afloat
We found us, and to float on that full tide
Was bliss unknown. Nay, if Elysium lay

Beyond such seas, the great souls thither bound
Would loiter like schoolboys along the way.
All senses now were swallowed up in one,
All thought, all feeling, aye, the soul itself
Sat in the ear; as when some city's throng
Stall, hall, and home, and market-place forsake
And crowd the minster gates to crown their king.
Crowned in their hearts already. If the spell
Lay on us, for an hour, or hour of years,
None knew; but all too soon the tuneful flood
Caressed us homeward, and our spirits touched
Once more the gray coasts of Reality.

So the god sang and ceased or would have ceased
But for a passionate cry, born of a heart
Insatiate. "Lo, thy songs" (so rang the cry)
"Be all of heaven. Sing us, O God, the songs
Of men."
An instant then Apollo paused,
Laid down his lyre, his lissom fingers clasped
Behind him, and, a simple-hearted youth,
Supreme in beauty, lifted up his voice
Again.
He sang of Youth and June; green fields
And dancing feet and velvet orchard floors
Pink with perfumèd snows; of bees and birds
And the shy tinkle of too-happy brooks
Wimpling among the roses. Then young Love
Moved through the music, and with him first came
The troubled note that, like the sombre lines
In imaged light, runs through all mortal joy.

Not this the sounding chant Olympus knew,
Nor a god singing; earthly bliss and grief
Mixed in these chords, an aching bliss, a grief
Dearer than half our joys. All human life
Flowed through the melody, and evermore
Echoing sighs; until at last the god
Leaving the palpable, in haunting strains
Too keen, too thrilling sweet for homesick hearts
To exile doomed, 'gan breathe of unsung hopes
And deep unutterable dreams that are
The soul's blind fumbling at the breast of Fate
Here in Time's darkness. Then with sound of tears,
Like the night rain in desolate Autumn woods,
A broken cry went up, "Forbear, O God,
Forbear, lest thou shouldst slay us with thy song!"

And all that day the old gods came and went,
Hailed each by his own nations, until all
Had passed; yet with expectant faces still
The World was waiting, and mine own heart stirred,
I knew not why, until afar I saw
Among the people One who long unknown
Had moved among them. He alone nor glance
Nor word gave the arena. Not the gods
Claimed him, nor their great deeds, but mortal men.
Dagon, the fish-god, high on gilded wheels
Departing, while the whirlwind shouts behind
Proclaimed him lord of many an ancient race,
Met face to face the Stranger, headlong fell
And was not. Yet when once the throng unleashed
Brake o'er the barriers, and warm human flesh
Muffled the horses' hoofstrokes and the whirr

Of chariot wheels, than this meek Presence bent
Low o'er the huddled heaps and touched and straight
Remade them men. Few were the words he spake
And low, but all as dear in listening ears
As fountains rippling through a parchèd dream.
None named his name, nor worshipped; yet, as when
The day-king tops the mountain, here and there
A lonely pinnacle shines back at him
While all else is in shadow, so the souls
High on Life's sky-line kindled one by one
When this King rose upon them. Blessings deep
Alone went after him, as to and fro
Healing, uplifting, comforting he passed.
And flashing silently down face by face
The knowledge of him dawned to open day.
Thereat a whisper passed among the throng,
And at the sound, the Stranger, strange no more,
Uprising slowly with a sleeping child
Hushed in His arms, looked on the folk.
Somewhat,
Or mist or veil it seemed, still hung between
His face and ours, and none had vision clear.
What port, what brow, what eyes were His, awaits
Our knowledge yonder, where good dreams come true;
But this I know—who saw that face forgot
That phantom crew of godless gods, and all
Their phantom deeds; forgot the palpitant sea
Of Humankind around him; yea, himself
Forgot, and God was all in all.
At last
A voice, of myriad myriad tongues conjoined
In one great utterance of assembled Man,
Worshipping rose.

"Yet, yet a little while"
(So swelled the prayer) "be patient with us still.
We have had gods before, but none like Thee,
So worn and marred and scarred yet all divine.
What are these wounded hands so passing soft
Upon our wounded hearts, these tears that dim
The Godhead in Thine eyes? Canst Thou be He
Whom once we slew? Ho, Pilate, Caiaphas,
Stand forth, and judge once more what Man is this!
Needs not! We know Thee now: Thy name is Love!
Now is Thy kingdom come, O Brother, Friend,
And God o'er all, blessed forevermore!"

And with that worship in mine ears, I woke,
And sought the window; night was well-nigh gone
From street and square below; a carven Pan,
Cowering among his shadows, stiffened fast
To senseless bronze; and shining high in heaven
A sunlit cross proclaimed our King—and day.

When the Bees Swarm

White-armed Jenny's at the table
 Singing soft and low,
Busy with her Sunday ruffles
 Crisp and white as snow,
Humming mother's quaint and homely
 Song of long ago.
 "Polly, put the kettle on,
 Polly, put the kettle on,
 Polly, put the kettle on,
 We'll all take tea."

In the dooryard dandelions
 Strew their careless bloom,
Lilac plumes and cherry blossom
 Mingle their perfume,
All the world is May, and Sorrow
 Only hath no room.
 Singeth still the dainty maid,
 Singeth lonely, unafraid,
 Of the part that Polly played
 When all took tea.

But there comes another humming,
 Buzzing, on the breeze,
Startled Jenny in the doorway
 Glancing through the trees,
Covers up her white arms, crying,
 "Mercy! It's the bees!"
 Now it's get the kettle out,
 Jenny, bang the pans about,
 Jenny, ring the bell and shout,
 When May bees swarm.

Father's busy with the planting,
 Mother's on the hill
Looking for a nesting turkey,
 Jenny with a will
Calls for help, and calling, struggles
 Single-handed still.
 Jenny, get the pail and cup,
 Jenny, fling the water up,
 Fling and ring and never stop,
 When May bees swarm.

Now again she tries the kettle,
 Now the mimic shower—
Will they never settle? She has
 Held them half an hour,
If her aching arms may witness,
 And she's losing power.
 Courage, Jenny! Wizards say
 That a swarm like this in May
 Well is worth a ton of hay,
 So ring your bell.

Here, at last, is father, saying,
 "Bravo! that will do;
They are settling on the plum-tree;
 Well, I'll see it through,
Run away now to your mother;
 What? They stung you, too?
 Run, you little paragon,
 Mother, put a poultice on,
 While I bend the branches down,
 And hive these bees."



The Quest.

"If Love hath power to heal men of their woes,"
(I prayed to Love's queen flower),
"It is the dewdrop in thy heart, O Rose;
Now let me taste its power."
My Lady Rose bent low her beauteous head,
I heard this whisper break,
"Love heals no hurt," she sighed the while she said—
"Save that Love's self did make."

Then to the Laurel I, "If wreathèd Fame
Of thy proud leaves distils
The wondrous nard that ancient seers proclaim,
Wilt thou not ease mine ills?"
Answered the leaves, "Were that thou pray'st upon
In Fame's wide kingdoms found,
King Arthur had not gone to Avalon
To cure him of his wound."

"Teach me thy sorcery, thou drowsy bloom,"
(I prayed the Poppy red),
"Let me, who cannot flee, forget my doom,
On thy dark balsams fed."
Breath of the flowers across my senses stole,
A hushed voice murmured, "So
Men drown To-day, but on To-morrow roll
Immeasurable woe."

Remained the Vine; and I with Bacchus' train
 Lolling in wanton ease,
Heard Omar babbling in vinolent strain
 Melodious blasphemies,
But found no help; nor dared I, like him, prone
 Along the wine-stained sod,
Assume the judge, and for the sins mine own
 Hands wrought, forgive my God!

But in the last black gateway toward despair
 Methought one took my hand
And led me up a barren hillside where
 One tree looked o'er the land.
"O Seeker for the balm of Ygdrasil,"
 He said, "Behold the tree!"
I looked; then trembling scanned that barren hill—
 And lo! 'twas Calvary!

Mercury

He speeds no more on wingèd heel,
 No wand with serpents twining
He bears, nor wears his antique cap
 Of brazen metal shining.
The purse he bore has grown a pouch
 As time his fortune betters,
And he who was Jove's messenger
 Is now our Man of Letters.

His fellow-gods were rustics all,
And loved the wood and mountain,
He long ago moved into town;
No leafy, lonely fountain
Claims him to-day, nor woodland shrine
Where Prayer looks up to Pity,
For Mercury's in business now,
With office in the city.

In formal cap and coat of gray,
With portly pouch of leather
He walks the streets in summer glow
And wildest winter weather.
I hear him passing, though he leaves
Nor paper nor epistle—
Men knew him once by staff and shoon-
I know him by his whistle.

He brings no word from Jupiter,
(Of heaven, or of Olympus),
And still will he in news of Mars
And Mistress Venus skimp us;
But human griefs and joys and fears
In daily round he carries,
And hearts are few that beat at ease
If long his footsteps tarries.

He leaves a note for sweetheart Nell,
For me the news from China,
With Kaiser Wilhelm's latest feat,
(A poem on "The Mina"),
The haughty sheet for which *Quill* writes,
And that for which *Penn* sketches,
With bills and dues and billets-doux
All these our Gray-coat fetches.

Though strange to us his vanished gods,
Majores et Minores,
Their ancient envoy turned to man
Right welcome at the door is;
Then health to him! And may his "beat"
Both gain and pleasure bring him,
With other bards in later times
And worthier verse to sing him.

Jackson's Monument

O laughing Shenandoah, in whose name
Thy waters whisper, and thou cloud-capped wall,
Gray Massanutten, who would lightly call
Ye aught beside, must bear a lasting blame;
Yet I, remembering whose sudden fame
Grew where your ripples sing, your shadows fall,
And grows forever, grandest far of all
Your Valley's harvest, would that change proclaim;
Yea, in his name this mount should rear its head,
The while along its base with silvery gleam
The river writes in lines of all men read
His wars immortal. And the world should deem
This just memorial to the deathless dead,
That Stonewall Mountain stands by Jackson's Stream.

NOTE.—Massanutten Mountain stretches for forty miles through the Shenandoah Valley, the scene of Jackson's most brilliant campaign, and is washed on both sides by the twin forks of the Shenandoah.

The King's Friend

King Solomon was old—
The cares of his kingdom weighed on him,
The sins of his children preyed on him,
And his new queen's fancies played on him,
When Solomon was old—
Grown old and sick and sad.

But on a day it fell
That the sick king roused him suddenly
And said to his servants, "Put on me
My crown and my royal robes; and see
That all the heralds tell
The king holds court to-day."

Then feet ran to and fro,
And in the palace was wild dismay,
But none might the royal word gainsay—
They put on him all his rich array,
And, wond'ring, watched him go
Up to his ivory throne.

He sat him down, and straight
The old light dawned in the old eyes dim,
The old flush glowed in the old face grim
And strength and beauty awhile to him
Returned. He spake elate
"Bring to me my best friend."

"Let the king's will be done!"
They said, but with starts and stares between,
Till a courtier whispered, "Tell the queen;
Mayhap she knoweth what this may mean."
Smiling, the queen said, "Run,
Bring my lord word I come."

She came with maidens fair,
Whose beauty to hers was leaf to rose,
Or lashes to eyes on which they close,
Or drifting foam to the drifted snows;
But the king smiling there,
Waved the bright band aside.

They brought his children then,
And many a bearded princeling tall
And wide-eyed wondering damsel small
Came thronging into the royal hall,
Only to pass again—
Their sire would none of them.

Some hero then they sought;
They hunted for wise men through the town,
For poets, counsellors, up and down,
And only to meet the king's slow frown;
Until at last distraught
They stood with folded hands.

Then Solomon uprose
And stood on the last stair, eager eyed,
"Give place, for the king's friend comes!" he cried;
All turned; on the great hall's further side,
Untouched, the doors unclose,
And with a shivering wind

A shadowy figure came,
(Some after swore no figure was there—
Some spake of his moonlit eyes, his hair—
And some dreamed long of his kingly air)—
And a thin wisp of flame
Flashed from the king to him.

So on the the marble cold
"'Neath the ivory throne—the story saith—
The weary monarch resigned his breath
To his last and longed for friend, King Death
For Solomon was old—
Grown old and sick and sad.

The Road of Dreams

'Tis no dim woodland way
With floor of grass broidered with fringèd pools
Of filtered sunlight, where dame partridge schools
Her brood at dusk o' day,
Nor orchard path, o'er which in odorous bower
The oriole blooms, a winged and singing flower,
New blown in new blown May.

It is no clanging street
Due east and west unwandering, bare and straight
Down 'twixt the housetops as the path of Fate,
Where is cold Mammon's seat,
And staring changeless as a blind man's eyes
The endless windows row on row arise
Above the hurrying feet.

Yet doth the dream road lie
Alike in field and town; twin bands of steel
On bedded logs, down which on clanking wheel
The long freight trains go by,
By day and night, and travelers grand and strange
And visions bright this grimy pathway range,
To a discerning eye.

What, think you, passes now,
Just giant sawlogs? Nay! I see a tall
Pine tree that tiptoe on Tacoma's wall
A thousand years his brow
Lifted cloud-high, to watch through devious miles
The ever changing, swift, far flashing smiles
That Puget's waves endow.

Yon dull heaps are not coal,
But leaf and flower and frond—poor smothered things
Mummied and buried, like old Egypt's kings,
When earth from pole to pole
Was ceaseless summer: these great blocks of stone
Are templed Karnak, or walled Babylon,
As past me now they roll.

And more than new-reaped grain
These dusky vans bring by; I see the surge
Of billowy wheatfields rippling toward the verge
Of wide horizons; plain
Comes a keen whirr of harvest wheels; and kind
Nature in new lands far brings back to mind
The Age of Gold again.

These gossip airs that tell
What summer fruits are passing, tell not all—
They bring, unknown, a garden with its wall
And orange trees that spell
Summer and Southland; and the vanished face
That blessed my garden wears the old, old grace
My childhood loved so welll

So at the open door
Musing, I watch the dream-world rolling by,
Old scenes, and faces dead that cannot die—
And, all my wanderings o'er,
Rest by the roadside; or, if I must roam,
Make but short journeys, travel still at home,
And mine own soul explore.

The Anesthetic

In clinging napkins, softly cool,
They lap me, cheek and brow.

"Breathe easily," a pleasant voice
Says in mine ear. And now
Blown odors from Oblivion's isles
Salute my sense; and I,
En route, but lingeringly alive,
Am wondering, as I fly,
How near—that—chartless coast may be—
The brink—the plunging-place—

And while I wonder, lo! my wife
Bends down with shining face.
"All's over, hours ago!" she cries.

Amen! With courage new
I rise. I know what death is now,
And resurrection, too.

Night Flowers

As weary travelers in a train
That stops they know not where,
Catch sometimes through the windows borne
Along the still night air,

A breath so sweet, their tired hearts,
Reviving 'neath its power,
Know well that hidden somewhere near
The wild grape vine's in flower,

So, oft a sudden sweetness here
Breathes through our pilgrim gloom,
And we too know that somewhere near,
God hath a soul in bloom.

Pilate

Still on the judgment-seat he sits
In his dark place apart,
One sound forever in his ears,
One anguish at his heart.

He hears no gnashings of the pit,
No groans of long despair,
But tones of kindly living men
That rise as calm as prayer.

He hears, and hears till time shall end,
The ransomed Nations tell
Of One whom Pontius Pilate slew—
And that is Pilate's hell.

Like Zaccheus

"Say, hold up a minute! O, stranger, wait!"
He called, and came down the hill
From the cabin crouched in the edge of the pines,
As the traveler's horse stood still.

"Be you-uns a preacher?" Jes' so! "That's good.
Then you-uns can tell me true—
Is they any sycamore trees in heaven?"
The parson stared, but the blue

Eyes bent on his own like a levelled gun
Were dark with a haunting pain,
And he answered, wondering, "That, my friend,
Is a thing not yet made plain.

But why must you know? "'Tain't me, it's the boy
Must know," said the mountaineer.
"He's been mighty po'ly a long spell now,
And 'pears like he's bound to hear

"'Bout them sycamores. Could you-uns light down
And set by him for a while?
I'd sho'ly be thankful." Though yet his home
Was distant many a mile,

The preacher alighted and climbed the hill
And came to the cabin door;
The face of a dwarfed and crippled lad
Looked up from the earthen floor,

A face that had numbered no more of years
Than would perfect Youth's brief span,
But had known more pain than is often made
The lot of a long-lived man.

And a piping voice that was weak and thin
Soon was pouring out the tale:—
"Where 'd I get it? Out o' the book. Look, Pap,
On the shelf there, by the pail."

The bible shook in his wasted hands—
"He was little and short, like me,
Old Zaccheus was, and it says he went off
And clumb up a sycamore tree

"For to see Him pass; and thinks I to myself,
That's the very trick! As shore
As ever I come where my Lord goes by,
I'll find me a sycamore,

"If so be they *is* any; for I know
It'll be a monst'us crowd,
With them angels a-marchin' down the street,
And the harps all playin' loud,

"And I'm 'feared, onless they's some trees up there
That's limby and low and free,
That my Lord'll come smilin' and shinin' by,
And I'll—have—no—chance—to—see."

* * * * * * * * *

The preacher tried thrice ere the words would come,
(They were old words, grand and good),
And he lingered long by the pallet low,
And when through the darkening wood

He rode, the monarchs that over him towered,
Pine, maple, and hickory,
He passed unheeding, and under his breath
Said, "The sycamore for me."

The Worker And His Work

"Not only for Angels," the angel said,
"And Mortals—for us and for you,
God paints the plumes on the wings of the moth
And the splendor that flashes through

"When sunset opens the gates of the west—
Now hearken. A long-ago day
In heaven was festival set; for a star,
New-made and star-cycles away,

"Its first rich harvest of glory had sent
To lay at the foot of the throne;
But the triumph tarried; the songs were mute,
For the Lord from his place was gone.

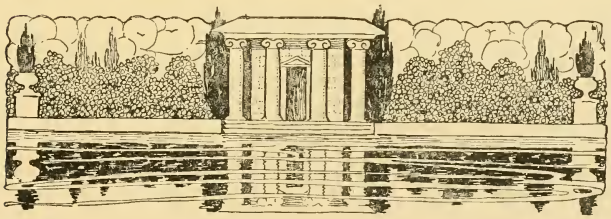
"We found him at last in the world of Man,
In a hidden and lonely vale,
Where a woodman's cabin stood by a lake
And the end of a grassy trail.

"The woodman was sleeping. A great red moon
Came over the shadowy hill,
And wondering gazed on another moon
And her stars in the waters still,

"As the moon has done since the first night fell;
And there in the whispering wood
God looked on his handiwork while men slept,
And again he declared it good.

"And not till those bright twin visions had passed,
And the light on the lake was thin,
Did the waiting throng in the courts above
Hear the word from the throne, 'Begin.'

"Not only for Angels," the angels said,
"And Mortals—for us and for you;
His also the beauty of heaven and earth
Who made it and loveth it too."



June Apples

The tree grew close to the orchard wall
In a June of the Long Ago,
(I could show you yet where the pathway ran
Through the clover a-bloom below),

And jewel-red 'twixt the laughing leaves
Where the clustering apples rare;
We knew they were ripe by the tell-tale breath
Of the breeze that had kissed them there.

How oft, at the young day's first caress
On our eyes, we have leaped from bed,
And with swift feet dashing the dews aside,
Down the devious path have sped

To gather the windfall under the tree!
Oh, the years as they hurrying pass
Bring me never again that dear delight
Of the apples there in the grass.

Is it because there were shouts that day
That are long ago silent grown,
And other feet ran with mine in the road
I must henceforth travel alone?

Were the apples as sweet as now I dream?
Or is this the usury bold
That we ever of hoarding Memory claim
For the joys we lent her of old?

Who knows? I only know that the zest
That was in them of sun and showers—
The piquant freshness of Youth and the dawn,
And the sweetness of Life's first flowers.

Is gone! Though still by the orchard wall
They redden, with clover below,
June apples ripen but once in a life:
And I had mine summers ago.

Bedtime

The Father stopped moulding a star,
And looked down to men—
"It is bedtime; put up your toys,"
He said; and again

Was busy star-building. But straight
The children 'gan fret
And murmur. The Statesman, aggrieved,
Prayed, "Must I, just yet?"

The Soldier was pleading, "Oh, wait
Till after this fight!"
And the Poet, shaking his hair,
Cried, "I hate the night!"

And the Lord God answered them not
Nor yea nor yet nay
Till his new world, finished and lit,
Rolled forth and away.

Then he bent him above them. Their heads
Were heavy and low,
And they knew not when their limp palms
Let the playthings go.

But deep was the smile in his eyes
And gentle the hands
That lifted them close to his breast
And loosened the bands

That are flesh, and folded away
Their mortality,
Though they whimpered a little still,
Not knowing 'twas he.

And he laid them down in a place
Close under his eye,
There to slumber the long night through,
With him watching by.

And out of the dream I had dreamed
This comfort there grew—
At bedtime Our Father in Heaven
Is our Mother too.

The Discovery

Bend low, my soul, and listen, listen long!
More's in the wind than shouting, or mere song,
More than earth knows, or sea, or watching sky,
With day and night goes by.

I heard a viewless echo down the wood
Say low, "Good, good!"
As once with eager feet
I passed my tryst to meet,
And mark arbutus part her leafy covers
For me the earliest come of all her lovers.
Like quests of old had taught me where to look,
And by the piquance of her breath around,
Along a singing brook,
In a warm bight the dainty fair I found;
But while I bent above her,
Down the dark coverts of the lonely wood
I heard departing echo saying over
That low, "good, good";
And that my flower had still an earlier lover,
I understood.

Once on the mountain side
Hid in the rocks, I watched the whirlwind rise
Along the wave. The moon in heaven died,
And stars shone lustreless as dead men's eyes
Behind a sudden veil
Of mist, that grew a pall,
And then a solid wall
Driving before the gale;
It swirled, it moaned, and, bellowing fury, broke
As hell itself were whelping: wind and wave
Commingled till it seemed the wind did smoke
'Gainst jagged cliffs, and howling waters drave
High up in air; while over all the storm
Came a great shout,
As in the midmost rout
Somewhat passed by me like an awful form.

Clouds were his robes, his chariot, clouds his hair,
White beyond all compare,
With not a least lock waving
Despite the raving
Tornadoes round; and lightnings at his feet
Writhed fawning; but his face I might not meet—
Still unto mortal eye
Jehovah must be but a God gone by.

But O my heart, my heart, unsteadily and low
Beating, and breaking slow—
The way behind was long, before, is lonely
Thou thinkest, and thou only
Unfriended onward to the goal must go—
Have comfort; waits thee at the turn designed
One who of old had mind
To walk with Man in Eden's even glow.

And once in northern wild
Slowly I loosed mine arm beneath the head
Of my dead guide, and seemly laid each limb,
And closed with fingers mild
Those Indian eyes that never I saw dim
Till now; and passed outside
The lonely camp.
Naught but the snow-fields spread
Around me there, and night and silence wide;
But high o'erhead,
Lily and lavender and gold and red,
Aurora flamed, as if Heaven-town were burning,

And all its jewelled walls,
Gardens and bowers,
Porches and palace-halls
And shadowy towers,
Were, not to ashes, but some new Heaven, turning;
And all the sky shook like a shimmering curtain
In some swart emir's tent,
As high and higher
Those streamers vast, now single, and now blent
In sinuous shapes uncertain,
And many a changing but still awful spire,
Lorded the firmament.
And hark! Was that a cry,
Outlying thunders, or far people shouting?
Who knows? But listening in a startled doubting,
I heard afar, anigh,
A deep-drawn, quivering, all-pervading sigh.

Seek him, ye saints, still round your altars pale,
Or in hushed closets dim;
I search, in budding praise, the vernal vale
The sky, the whirlwind's rim—
Climb, an ye may, O Men, the heights of Duty
His own feet once in meekest patience trod,
But I entrancèd, at some shrine of Beauty
His own hand shaped, Lo! I too, find my God.

Dream Wreck

My Love and I went sailing
 High on the heavenly main—
My Love, to seek new isles of joy,
 And I, to lose or gain.
A hope, a dream, so thrilling-sweet
 'Twas nigh akin to pain—
That sometimes waked and sometimes slept,
 But always waked again.

Earth was a map beneath us—
 And heaven stooped dear and nigh,
"Now is our kingdom come!" My Love
 Exulted, "Now we fly;
"Yon glory-cloud just gone," she cried
 "Maybe, is God gone by."
"Or some bright earthly dream," I said,
 "Come true, here in the sky."

It was not mine; for gently
 She sighed, and shook her head,
And ere my stammering tale was done,
 I knew my hope was dead—
The brightest dream I had on earth,
 In heaven was finishèd.

And o'er the misty mountains,
 And back along the seas,
And o'er the pillared smoke that clomb
 From green clumps that were trees
Our wide wings brought us home again
 To earth's uncertain ease.

And of that wondrous journey,
These things alone remain—
For her, a glory-cloud gone by,
For me an endless pain
For all Love's argosies that day
Wrecked on the heavenly main—
For hopes and dreams that waked and slept,
But ne'er will wake again.

The Accompanist

Seven times her welcome thunders, roar on roar,
Like Fundy's mightiest storm-tides, till the hall
Itself is tempest-shaken. Still I wait.
Never again, since that night when her wrath
Imperial blazed against me, dare I sound
The keys too soon.
But now the tumult dies;
And turning with a well-earned touch, that owns
No more a peer than does yon deathless voice,
I strike the prelude. Round and full and slow
The liquid bell-notes, perfect each, and all
Consummate, muster. Then she sings.
Pearls gleam
Like moonlight in her midnight hair, and three
White roses on her white breast rise and fall
All but unknown; for that which trances sense
Is her sole self, rich in her double dower
Of Beauty and of Song. Mine own ears turn
Not once away, nor would though Israfel

Stood choiring by; for through th' enchanted doors
Her magic opens, dreams she has not known
Drift by, and other voices than the sea
She sings, commingle with her song.

"All the rivers come to me—
Some by temples hoary, holy,
Some through dozing deserts dim,
Some by white peaks melancholy
Watching on the wide world's rim—
Gliding, gleaming, some in glee.
Some in sorrow silently,
Seek the sea."

How still,
How rapt, these leaning faces!—to the eye,
All eyes, but eyes that seem to listen too,
For one sense may as little drink this sound
As one poor window let all daylight in—
And still along the song my shaded notes
Unnoticed run. She knows no hand but mine
Can weave, and weaving, subtly hide the web
Her voice emblazons into cloth-of-gold;
Aye, well she knows I own, I seek, no art
But ministers to hers. No hope, no dream
Is mine, no beckoning call of far, bright things
With half-heard promise of some waiting crown—
Dear God! Why should all, all, be hers, and mine
No kindly word—not even the poor acclaim
Of perfect aid to her supremacy!

For, look you, this mad throng that on their feet
In tumult shout her name to heaven again,
In all their praise, have not one thought of me,
"That shy, poor thing, who plays!" as once by chance
I heard them pitying name me. Yet was I
Born in the purple, and Ambition's heir,
And when Fate dragged me down, far, far along
The road to crowning—
Hark, again she sings—

"Stranger pilgrims yet there be
Come to me—
Waking joys that would be sleeping,
Sleeping grief that's nigh to wake,
Love and Fame and Terror creeping
In me rest and refuge take,
Aye, whatever stars may be,
And the day, go down in me—"
Croons the sea.

I thought this heart of mine had done with pain,
As broken lyres with throbbing; but this song
Thrills me afresh. The dark-eyed lad I knew—
Knew to the least up-curling of the long
Eyelashes o'er his smiling—comes to me
From unplumbed darkness of an ocean grave.
Five years of life—of pain, their double term—
Have schooled me since he parted, grieved and wroth

Because she yonder (whom a thousand eyes
Worshipped that night, as mounting thousands now),
I fancied looked a thought too kindly on
My lad, my lad alone!
I lost him so—
The sea-mists mazed him, and Newfoundland gulfs,
Ambushed in that blind twilight, roared him down;
And I crept back to life from listless weeks
Of waiting at Death's doors, bereft alike
Of love and power. Music's dead kings no more
In my swift-moving fingers lived and reigned;
One thing alone still could I compass large,
At long thereafter, when my life came back—
Could lend mine art, with passing skill, to lift
And thrill the singer—
This one thing I do,
By grief made keeper of the time and tune
Of others' triumphs, till there's no more sea.

"All that is, and is to be,
Somewhere, sometime, comes to me—
Somewhere also all my rolling
World of wastes as moons shall wane,
Sometime God's doom-bell go tolling
Me into the void again—
What am I, and what are ye,
Mortals all, but Vanity."
Sighs the sea—
"Mirth and dust and vanity,"
Moans the sea.

The Tree of Love

"Thou hast news!" They gathered round him ere his wings were wholly folden,
Ben-Azel, angel of God's trees, and all the garden throng,
Newly come from earth with tidings of a thing, till now withholden,
So sweet to tell, his listeners' lips unconscious curved for song.

His face was like a lamp alight. "It is not lost forever!"
He cried aloud. "But yester-eve, I walked among the trees
Of the garden, Man's old Eden, all along the parted river—
It is not lost, but hidden till God's hand the curtain frees.

"But a new tree's come to Eden, though no wind may lisp the wonder—
The ripples on the Hiddekel in silence by it glide,
And the happy pools of Gihon hold their breath the lilies under,
To keep its mirrored image sleeping on the sleeping tide.

"By the long-forsaken pathway Adam trod at cool of even.
It stands, as wrapped in wintry dreams among the glowing flowers,
And—it's whispered—there at dusk again the Visitor from Heaven
Awaits his old companion down the lonely walks and bowers.

"It's a marvel new in Eden in its story and its seeming—
It bore a priceless harvest once, and now is sere and stark;
But it's budding; and all Paradise is leaning forth and streaming
In slender tendrils toward it in the day and in the dark.

"Little red flowers called hosannas thick around its foot are springing,
And eyes no eyes may quite discern watch it from hill and glen,
And though Pishon brings but hints of it, his cliffs break into singing,
And hills far down in Havilah reverberate 'Amen!'

"There's a rumor it was earth-born—on a low hill by a garden—
That this was once the midmost tree in dread Golgotha's gloom—
Heaven send it! Then some destined day shall Eden's angel-warden
Cry out, 'O Man, come back, come home! The Tree of Love's in bloom!'"

The Emmaus Guest

Pillowed at twilight on the window-seat,
She took shy invoice of the passers-by,
 Appraising mien and gesture: bearing high
 And air complacent, won of her but fleet,
Half-wistful glance; but when with lingering feet,
And shadowy face, some wayfarer drew nigh,
 On him she turned a timid, asking eye,
 Hoping, though doubting still, a friend to greet.
Then to me, softly, *"It's a play,"* she said—
"I make believe the wondrous Emmaus Guest
 In the red twilight may pass by this way."
 Ah, happy one! Here is her empty bed,
Her crutch, forever idle, though the rest,
To me, is tears. Her Guest came yesterday.

The Pine Tree In Town

Of old his outlook swept the mountain-side
 To either gate of day. Orion rose
 And set before him, and the wind that knows
All things, would tattle in his branches wide
Arabian tales; he watched young eagles glide
 On moveless wing, and heard at twilight's close
 The lone wolf howl, or thunder-tongued echoes
Of some tree's downfall on the night's noontide.
And now, stripped to the quick, his only view
What one dull street may hold of earth and sky,
 He lifts the wires, while round him pant and growl
Labor and Greed—but hears, all tumults through,
Far o'er remembered lakes, the loon's wild cry,
 Or from the hillside dark, the hooting owl.

The Shepherd's Voice

(*Hymn from A Forthcoming Children's Day Service*)

Solo
Night on the mountain-side,
Fear on the wold,
Dangers unseen are near,
Ills manifold
Compass the shadowy way
Whereon I wend;
God of the wanderer,
Chorus Thy comfort send.

Hear ye, O hear the heavenly whisper falling
Far out where lost one's roam,
Shepherd Immanuel through the dark is calling,
"I am the Way: come home!"

Deeper the darkness grows,
While on my soul
Doubts, like a wintry sea,
Drearily roll;
O for some mighty word,
Proven, not guessed,
Some tried foundation stone,
Where Faith might rest!

Calm as the night-snows, windless woodlands wreathing,
Sweet as lost songs of Youth,
The Word Divine o'er all our doubts is breathing,
"Believe me: I am Truth!"

Now must I lay me down—
Done all my prayers,
Ended alike my hopes
Sorrows and cares;

Harmless and helpless both
Foeman and friend—
Lo, at the open door
Death—and the end!
"Nay, though one die," saith Christ—O promise golden!
"Yet shall he live again;
He that is mine shall not of Death be holden
I am the Life!" Amen! Amen!

The Children's Prayer

The time, O Lord, is long gone by,
The place is far away,
That saw thee once on little heads
Thy hands in blessing lay.

Hast thou no blessings more to give?
Can this thy mercy bar,
That some may hear thy loving call
Too late, in lands too far?

Nay, not Judean hills alone,
Nor Sharon's plains are thine;
The whole wide world of human need,
To thee, is Palestine.

For us, for all, thy pangs of old,
For us to-day thy scars,
And room will be in Jesus' arms
While heaven has room for stars.

Then take us, Lord. We know not all
Thy blessings on us mean,
We only know that heads like ours
Must have somewhere to lean.

Make us to feel the eternal arms
That fold us to thy breast,
And, like the little ones we are,
We'll leave thee all the rest.

The Waiting World

What see ye, O ye mountains strong,
That lift your heads on high,
And in the dark and in the dawn,
Look out across the sky?
"The dark and dawn they come and go,
But we look out alway
To see if yet begins to break
The Lord's Redemption Day."

Ye little brooks, why hurry so?
The roses, as ye pass,
Can scarce their bending faces see
In such a shaking glass.
A sigh along the ripples ran,
I heard the bubbles' song,
"We haste to greet the coming King—
How long, O Lord, how long?"

Ye winds that wander to and fro,
And gossip east and west,
What is't ye whisper in the leaves
That will not let them rest?
The winds made answer low and strange—
"We bid them ready be
To clap their hands all round the world,
When men His sign shall see."

The plodding ox before the plough,
The huddled sheep in stall—
The patient slaves or prey of Man,—
Like answer made for all.
All groaning, wait the day, the prince,
That Man's redemption bring;
But when the tale was told to men,
They said, "What day? What king?"

The Healer

Because the Lord hath bruised thee, thou hast balm
For others' wounds, and writ deep in thy palm
Wearest the signet of that pain and power;
For what thine eyes did once at Bethany
Sorrow's wan sisterhood still turns to thee,
And Grief's long storm falls to a soothing shower.

Because thou wast forsaken on the tree
Thou knowest to comfort them that desolate be
When they are dying; and since thyself hast trod
Death's vale unshepherded, the Roman spear
Thine only rod and staff, thou wilt be near
When we go lonely to keep tryst with God.



In That Land

There is singing sweet, and gladness,
In that land;
There is never note of sadness,
In that land,
But the sweetest of the anthems chanted on the glassy sea,
Is the song of homing pilgrims who were some time such as we;
Men and maids and little children, now forevermore to be
In the glory of the golden land

There is freedom from old sorrow,
In that land,
And they care not for to-morrow,
In that land;
Nay, to-day's enough and over, murmur they with hearts that swell
With the joys too big for keeping, yet too strangely sweet to tell,
Though they poured their souls in music with the voice of Israfel,
In the glory of the golden land.

There are heroes of old story,
In that land,
And they bring their pomp and glory,
In that land;
They that here were meek and lowly, share with them each shining hall,
And there's never one a weakling, shamed or pitied, 'mid them all;
Never one the Lord Almighty doth not son or daughter call.
In the glory of the golden land.

Peace is flowing like a river,
In that land;
Toil and care are gone forever,
In that land,
And they lie at ease, and wonder at their half-forgotten fears,
For a hand that here was wounded, there shall wipe away their tears,
And the King's first look of welcome lights their souls a thousand years,
In the glory of the golden land.

The Angel of the Passion

Angel of angels, haloed in his hair,
Musing he stands while heaven around him rings,
His shadowy eyes alone, like woodland springs,
Flashing their hallelujahs. Low and rare
His speech; nor work, nor fellow hath he there;
Nor 'mid that company of seraphs, kings,
And potentates, is there another brings
A greater glory. Yet is this his share
Of heaven—to wander mindful where the trees
Their shadows loose along th' immortal sod;
To hear ONE crying; Kedron on the breeze
Murmuring; and coming feet in armor shod
Clank from the hill-side; then to feel 'mid these
His breast once more upbear his dying God.

An Old Man's Prayer

We do not ask that blessing, Lord,
 Thou dost on babes bestow,
The innocence thou lovest in them
 We lost long years ago.

If but the Young thy face may seek,
 The Good thy kindness sue,
Our hopes are vanished all, for we
 Are old and sinful too.

Too old to claim thy favor here,
 Too bad to hope for heaven,
One boon alone of thee we crave—
 It is—to be forgiven.

Thou hast thine own hairs white as wool,
 Ancient of Days art thou!
Great God, to whom shall old men go?
 Be thou our helper now.

In Old Jerusalem

("Like unto children, sitting in the market place." Matt. 11:17.)

"Ho, Reuben, Anna, Benjamin!"
 Rings out the eager call,
"Haste to the empty market-place,
 Come, playmates, one and all;
The trade is done, the merchants gone,
 Let each small man and maid
Run hither now to share the fun."
 —Who watches in the shade?

"What shall we play? A marriage feast?
Good! Little Ruth is bride,
And Reuben shall the bridegroom be,
Sit down there side by side,
While we join hands, and, piping shrill,
The wedding dance begin.
Sing now!"—The Listener by the wall
Smiles at the merry din.

"In dizzy whirl, with laugh and shout,
This way and that we swing,
And quick feet patter in and out,
And blithe our voices ring;
Long life we wish the happy pair,
Fond hearts and fortunes due"—
Look at yon careworn Watcher now!
His eyes are dancing too.

"But, Nathan, why do you stand still?
You will not dance, you say?
Well, if we play a funeral
Goes slowly down the way,
With you chief mourner by the bier
To knock your breast and groan—
Then will you play?"—The stranger's eyes
With kindling pity shown.

He waits to hear the lad's reply,
And soon, with patient feet,
Goes on his way; and darkness falls,
And silent grows the street;
But in the amber of his speech,
For all the coming years,
The Master sets the children's play
That now he sees and hears.

"Like children." Are we? Lord, then turn
This way thy shining feet
That go no more to Calvary;
Look on while we repeat
This older, sadder game of life
With strong men's hopes and fears;
Smile on our joys, and when we weep,
O Master, wipe our tears.

The Sighing in the Pines

Under the pillared stems
I laid me down,
Wind-music high o'erhead
Under me, brown

Pine-needles piled; and while
The twilight gleam
Lingered along the hills,
I dreamt this dream.

The pine tree cried to God,
(When Time was new)
"The apple tree bears fruit
And blossoms too.

"And even the crooked vine
By Eden's wall
Its purple clusters fills
Against the fall.

"But never sound of bees
My summer owns;
Ripe Autumn brings me naught
But rattling cones.

"Weary am I to bear
These green harp-strings,
Weary to hear the songs
The gay wind sings

"Among these slender boughs
Thou madest a lute—
Take back thy songs, O Lord,
And give me fruit."

* * * *

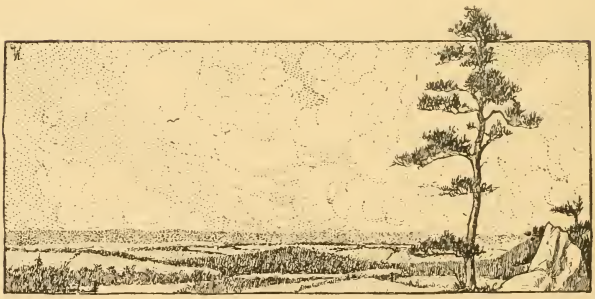
Lo! on yon hill outside
Jerusalem,
With Heaven and Earth at gaze,
Uprears a stem,

A felled and riven trunk,
 Sapless and stark,
And ONE uplifted there,
 Dies in the dark.

The pine tree hath its prayer—
 For gain or loss—
This was the fruit it bore—
 HIM on his cross.

And nevermore, though winds
 Still frolic be,
Are the old songs of mirth
 Heard in that tree;

But through its quivering leaves,
 Too late made wise,
One sound unceasing swells,
 A sound of sighs.



The Test

How shall we know our Lord when first we wake
In heaven? If in the drear Aegean isle
An angel's glory could e'en John beguile
To misplaced worship, may not we mistake
Michael for Christ, and so, untimely, break
Our box of ointment? Strange to us the smile
Immanuel wears, nor have we e'er, the while
Our hearts burned in us, listened when He spake
As He did once at Emmaus. We know
Nor Him nor angels, and in His own lands
He doth not alway crowned and Godlike go,
But moves—just Jesus!—'mid His eager bands
Of old companions; yet this sign shall show
Our king and Heaven's—He still hath wounded hands.

Johanan

"Hence now, ye little ones, Naomi, Dan,
And Samuel, go play there by the wall
Where fig-leaves whisper and the fountain leaps
To pour cool kisses round your twinkling feet.
Hath He not blessed you? Get you gone, I say.
But Thou, O Mighty, hear me."
"Speak. I hear."
"Thou dost but waste Thy blessing upon these,
O Nazarene. Why wilt Thou feast the full,
Or light Thy lamp at noonday? Mark them there,
Their songs, their laughter! Nay, what greater thing
Could the great God give to these happy ones
Than that they have, being babes? But come Thou hence,

I'll show Thee men old, withered, hard of heart,
And wicked, even as I; men not more like
Their childhood than the sad Salt Sea is like
Its youth, the Jordan. On them desolate,
Turn the mild pity of Thy tranquil eyes,
And make them know the marvel of Thy voice
Who have no mother hands to lead them here,
Nor yet are fit to come."
"Yea, friend, who will
May come," the answer fell. "And thou, oppressed
With others' ills, what wilt thou for thine own?"

Doubt, hope, and wonder held Johanan dumb
Till on his ears once more the children's glee
Tinkled, as when all Hermon's rills a-chime
Sing summer. Then he cried, "Make me, O Lord,
As one of these."
Instant on that white head
Bowed low, were laid the gentle hands foredoomed
To nail-prints, and the voice that made the world
Whispered above him and he stood up changed.

Alway thereafter 'mid the childish throng
An old man moved, simple and glad of heart
And innocent as they. Malice and pride
Dropped from him as old leaves from wakening pines
At touch of spring. Men mocked at him, and some
In secret envied; he, in sweet content
Went on his simple way till one still eve
They found him sitting by the fountain wall
With small Naomi nestling in his arms,
And both asleep; she pillowed on his breast,
And he on God's.

Dominion

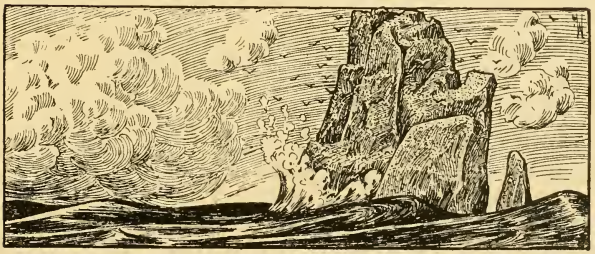
When mine own senses all
 Shall governed be,
Walled like a river, like
 A river free:

When these swift thoughts no more
 Like blown leaves fly,
But ordered range, as wild-fowl
 Cleave the sky:

When on the will enthroned
 The passions wait,
Meek as the homing kine
 At pasture gate:

Mine then shall be no pride,
 No glorying,
But all my powers reclaimed
 I'll straightway bring

Praying to Him who owns
 The tribute due
"I am thy slave. Lord, give
 Me work to do."



An Old Fashioned Sport

When chestnut trees are beaten bare,
 And hickory leaves turn yellow—
When dropping papaws fill the air
 With perfume rich and mellow,
We boys steal off in early night
 While whimpering screech-owls shiver,
And by the pine-knot's flickering light,
 Go gigging down the river.

Our blazing prow in crystal swims;
 We hear a wind-blown tinkle
Of hidden rills, and through the limbs
 Stars peep, and home lights twinkle
On distant hills; and there below
 Where restless reeds are swaying,
A silent circle widens slow—
 The muskrat's door betraying.

Alert I lean along the bow
 With slender gig held ready,
While Ben now poles the boat, and now
 Stands still, and holds her steady.
The fallen leaves in squadrons pass,
 Each leaf its shadow throwing,
Till which are shadows, which are bass,
 Is often past our knowing.

The townsman rigged with rod and reel,
When summer suns are burning,
With angler's art here fills his creel,
Our rustic methods spurning.
But each to each his own delights—
No keener sport we're wishing
Than here in soft September nights
To try our Indian fishing.

And oft again, in wintry dreams,
Our boyish fancies straying,
Glide backward down the darkling streams
Where memory's torch is playing;
Again the steel is aimèd true,
And down young nerves a-quiver
Tingles afresh the thrill they knew
When gigging on the river.

The Wicket Gate

I wait no ghostly steed
That strong men, armed and soldierly, must ride
Out a-past Rigel to life's yonder side—
Let him who will, with speed
And sweat and fury think to gallop in
Upon God's peace, and so his heaven to win
I like another rede.

No stirrup-cup for me,
Perched on yon pawing courser; but, if so
A dying man may choose, I'll gentlier go;
I'll look right leisurely
All round the study; if it's wintry weather,
Take tongs, and once more coax the logs together,
And pile up two or three

Well-worn old books that lie
Open there on the table; then I'll call
My household in, and take dear leave of all,
Short speech, but lingering eye
Giving to each; and last with footstep slow
Leaning on Him who came for me, I'll go.
But when I first descry

Somewhat beside His face—
"Is this the way?" I'll ask in swift surprise,
"Your way," He'll answer me, with shining eyes,
For Lo! we do but pace
Mine own green lane that past the garden goes,
And were 't but summer, still I'd smell the rose,
We've come such little space.

And my heaven will begin,
I think, a little past the garden wall—
There'll be a wicket gate, not rich nor tall,
And until then, unseen;
That shall I find; and silent or with singing,
For good or ill, by that low wicket swinging,
My guide will bring me in.

Children's Praise

All the young world praiseth thee—
 Breezes born in shaded spaces,
 Lisping rills in lonely places,
 Nestlings at their matin graces,
Rustling leaves in elfin glee—
In their music, Lord, praise thee.

All the bright world praiseth thee—
 Lilies pale and stars that twinkle,
 Diamond dews that roses sprinkle,
 Crystal waves that flash and tinkle,
Rainbow arch on shining sea—
In their beauty, Lord, praise thee.

Yet they know not what they do—
 Sun and song come with the season,
 Song and sun are all their reason,
 Not to shine and sing were treason,
And to time and season true,
They but pay their tribute due.

Hear, Lord, what the children sing—
 All the wordless music rarest,
 All the voiceless beauty fairest,
 All the wide earth's richest, dearest,
Blended in our songs we bring
In our praise to thee, O king.

The Second Sight

New waked to meet the judgment scene,
He stood before the throne
Amid unnumbered humankind,
And thought he stood alone.

A scroll was thrust into his hands,
Close-writ, and long and long.
"'Tis thus," they cried, "thy record runs,
This hast thou done of wrong."

He little heeds: like new-roused child,
The sleep yet in his eyes,
On one bright Face he gazes still
With still renewed surprise.

"Stand forth!" he hears. "What plea hast thou
To stay the avenging rod?"
"This only," wondering still he cries,
"Behold the Lamb of God."

A light, a rapture, thrills the scene;
A silence falls; and then
In deeps star-deep beyond the stars
Rolls echoing, "Amen!"

And, like a great wind heard by night,
Far breathes the word, "Forgiven:
And that I gave thee Him on earth
Now give Him thee in Heaven."

His Hidden One

Ere the grass conquered him and trod him under,
The nested sparrows mocked his homeless head:
To-day his palace fair, heaven's newest wonder,
Lifts its white dome with glory garnishéd.

He had not dreamed here with the great to seat him;
In lowly paths remote he meekly trod;
Yet ranged seraphs stood uncrowned to greet him,
What time he heard the clear "well done," of God.

Pent for long years was he in fleshly prison,
His weary soul wore deep the dungeon scar,
But now to fair far heights right royal risen,
The angels hail him lord of the morning star.

"Arise, Let Us Go Hence"

Out of the upper chamber,
After the feast is done,
Out of the blessed circle
With Judas only gone,
Out of the growing comfort
The Master's word bestows,
Out of the peace where all doubts cease
And all strife silent grows—
"Arise, let us go hence."

Over the murmuring Kedron,
 Into the garden's gloom,
Into a foreseen anguish,
 Unto a foretold doom,
Unto the kiss of traitors,
 The faithlessness of friends,
Into the hour of the tempter's power,
 When Hell with Heaven contends—
 "*Arise, let us go hence.*"

Ever the warning soundeth
 Through all the ages, clear
As a harsh bell's jangling clamor
 Breaks on a dreaming ear,
Or as the cry of terror
 Which no wild winds can drown
When a vessel shocks on the sunken rocks
 And men to death go down—
 "*Arise, let us go hence.*"

O sharp, O sudden summons!
 But soft! What does he say?
"Let *us* go hence?" Yea, Master,
 If Thou but lead the way,
The straitest, sternest pathway
 That ever mortal trod
Shall welcome be since we go with Thee
 In a road that leads to God—
 "*Arise, let us go hence.*"

St. Stephen's Vision

So Stephen spoke. Then leaped their startled rage
Like the coiled viper when the passing heel
That crushes it is raised. They hated him
As blasted pines hate lightning. But the while
Their hissing fury rose, the patient saint,
Already angel-faced, was given to see
What angels only may: the opening heavens
Flashed on him awestruck, and he saw the King.
High on His throne He stood new risen, attent,
August; His station such that heaven expects
New marvels great. His vesture droops away
In refluent curves of wind-carved snow; His hair
Of curled light blows wide. Forward He leans
With outstretched hand, as if in act to greet
Some equal Majesty who comes to-day
Into his kingdom; and His eyes meanwhile
Orbing such Godlike welcome, as, being turned
On chaos, life and light and love would spring
In ruin's womb responsive, or but glanced
On devil deepest damned, would draw him up
And straight remake him angel.
Him beheld
Stephen, first martyr. What thereafter lay
He little heeded.
'Mid that after rain
Whose every drop was death, he, mute and still,
Was like a cradled child that trancéd lies
Still wrapt in rosy dreams, altho' loud War
Rages around, and momently the walls
Crash into ruin.

Caught to highest heaven,
Long time he gazes on that face divine
With speechless love, the while God's doméd halls
Reverberate with welcome: then kneels down
And prays high God to make him man again
And martyr, if through death's dark doors once more
That vision he may see.



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